

THE SCORE

A MUSIC MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

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'THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

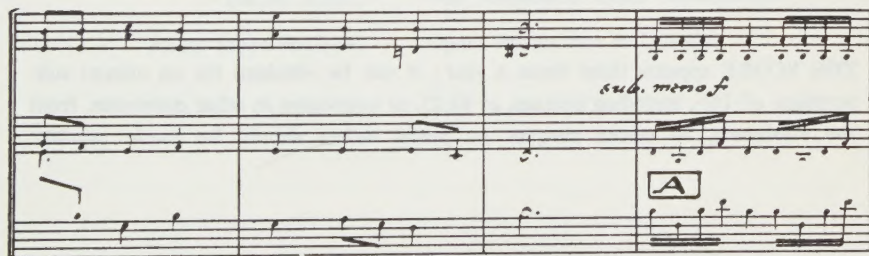
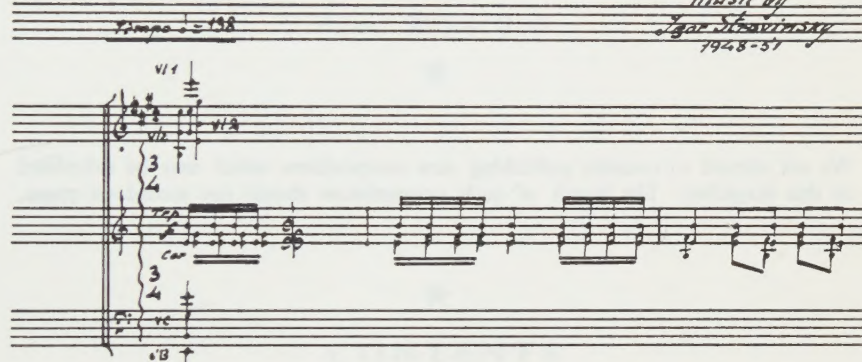
*Libretto by W. H. Auden
and Chester Kallman*

Opera in three acts

PRELUDE

*Music by
Igor Stravinsky
1948-51*

Tempo ♩ = 198



Part of the rough sketch for the Prelude to Stravinsky's new opera 'The Rake's Progress.'

Five Shillings

August, 1951

Editor : WILLIAM GLOCK

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE WE HOPE TO INCLUDE:

Marc Pincherle: *J. S. Bach and the Violin*
Ralph Kirkpatrick: *Scarlatti's Harmony (II)*
William Glock: *Some Problems of Interpretation*
Also articles on Schoenberg and Atonality
Reviews of The Rake's Progress (Stravinsky)
And of Billy Budd (Benjamin Britten)



We are pleased to consider publishing new compositions which may be submitted to this magazine. The length of such compositions should not exceed six pages.



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ON PLANNING AN ENGLISH OPERA

Edward J. Dent

The situation as regards English Opera to-day bears a certain resemblance to that of German Opera just over a century ago, in the days of Beethoven, Weber and Schubert. German historians have always done their best to persuade their readers that German Opera was created by Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven and Weber; but if we examine the works of these four great masters we shall find that Gluck never composed a German opera in his life, even if we accept the theory that he was a German himself, which is doubtful. Of Mozart's two German operas *Die Entführung* is a jumble of incongruous styles set to one of the worst librettos ever written, and *The Magic Flute* an experiment which could never be imitated as the foundation of an operatic style, although in details of technique it had a considerable influence on later works of a different type. Most people have ascribed its weaknesses to its libretto, and it is certainly the libretto which has always stood in the way of its understanding. The libretto of *Fidelio*, which as a matter of fact is a good deal better than many of its period, has also led many people to say that *Fidelio* is a great work but a bad opera. Weber produced three historically famous operas; of these *Der Freischütz* has been popular only in Germany (and it is a good deal laughed at there), and neither *Euryanthe* nor *Oberon* has ever held the stage as permanently and securely as, let us say, *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* have done. The failure of *Oberon* is accounted for by the concessions Weber is supposed to have been forced to make to the taste of the barbarous English; *Euryanthe* is the classical example of a musical masterpiece irretrievably ruined by an impossible libretto. As for poor Schubert, whom many musicians would perhaps consider to be a much greater composer than Weber, not even the modern operatic body-snatchers of the German theatre have considered his operas worth their macabre electrifications.

Taken altogether, it is a poor show for the most glorious period of German musical history, but it was not the composers who were to blame. Opera, more than any other form of music, depends largely on its social environment. Vienna has always been a city of good taste, frightened of anything new; if we search through Loewenberg's *Annals of Opera* for first performances at Vienna in the nineteenth century, we shall find that its most distinguished efforts have been *Linda di Chamoni* (in Italian), *Martha*, and Goldmark's *Königin von Saba*. Down to almost the end of the century it was the headquarters of anti-Wagnerism. In most of the great German centres the courts and the aristocracy supported Italian opera in the grand manner; German opera was more or less trivial *Singspiel* in minor theatres for the lower classes. Minor German composers produced hundreds of these things;

German historians prefer not to talk about them, or if they do, the best they can say of them is that they were 'German' to the core. The researcher may question even that; but in any case it is not much of a compliment. The great masterpieces of Goethe and Beethoven were German, in the sense that no one but a German could possibly have written them; but we should be sadly lacking in intelligence and in respect for them if we dismissed them with merely the patriotic adjective.

At the present day the general repertory of popular opera in Germany is based on a large stock of native German works; the same is fairly true for France and in Italy the main repertory is certainly Italian, as it has been for centuries. Translated opera hardly existed anywhere before the middle of the eighteenth century; it is only in the latter half of that century that we find quantities of German and other translations from French and Italian. By Beethoven's time the popular repertory in Germany was more French and Italian (in German translations) than native; the repertories are extant. Weber, as a conductor, had the greatest difficulty in inducing his audiences to listen to Mozart and Beethoven; they were not classics in those days.

Yet Germany at that date was swarming with poets, dramatists and composers—not all on the level of Goethe and Beethoven, but still men whose names are remembered with sincere respect. Nowhere in the world was music taken so seriously, and the theatre too. Why was it that opera, with apparently every chance in its favour, was in such a lamentable condition? The question is important for us English opera-lovers—whether composers or audiences—of the present day.

Our librettists and composers of to-day might learn a good deal about what not to do if they would read carefully the whole correspondence of Weber with Helmine von Chezy about the libretto of *Euryanthe*, and then proceed to analyse the libretto itself and the score, as well as to consider the various attempts made by subsequent conductors and producers to make the work practicable for the stage to-day. What happens with that unfortunate work time after time is that although performance at a festival with celebrated singers and a celebrated conductor may give the critics something interesting to write about, the opera never manages to establish itself in the standard repertory, as, let us say, *Fidelio* and *Der Freischütz* have done.

It may be said, and not unreasonably, that the analysis of a German opera performed in 1823 has no bearing on the problems of an English opera for 1951 or later. It is also most important to realize that the analysis of modern operas, if composed to foreign words, has its dangers as well as its utility, for it may easily tempt composers to adopt conventional turns of phrase which are quite unsuitable to the English language. This will have the effect of making the original English words sound like an indifferent translation. I stress this matter of translation, because the practice of translating operas can teach us a great deal about the handling of English words for musical setting, and I would recommend prospective English librettists to try their hand at translating a foreign opera, or even a single scene, by way of a preparatory exercise. Many of the older English librettos, such as those of Bunn and Fitzball, read curiously like translations and not original English.

We have to ask ourselves to-day how far modern English opera is to follow the foreign conventions of the past and how far it is to break away from them. We ought certainly to admire the pure idealist who like Wagner in exile sets himself to create an entirely new type of national music-drama which no ordinary opera-house, singers or producers could possibly carry out in practice. And Wagner saw too that even if he did achieve under his own direction a single performance of *Tristan* or *The Ring* that he thought adequate, these operas would soon fall back into the old Meyerbeerian conventions as soon as they were put into the repertory of an ordinary court theatre. As things are in England to-day, the general situation may appear to be far worse, but it is in some ways decidedly better than that of the German theatre a century ago. In Germany there was the accumulated slag-heap of routine in a hundred theatres; here we have only two opera-houses of any continuity—I dare not say ‘permanency’—and they, so far from being slaves to routine, have hardly begun to acquire even the useful elements of it. Our ignorance and inexperience may in fact be positive advantages; the pioneering composer will have less rubbish to clear away, and his environment will at least be encouraging rather than obstructive on principle.

At the risk of seeming to belong to an almost extinct political party, I would suggest that what our musical community needs just now is not another Wagner and an English Bayreuth, but a number of poets and composers who within the existing conventions can create not one immortal masterpiece but a whole repertory of practicable operas on modern and really English lines. The mistake of the German romantics was that they thought to create a German operatic language by mixing French and Italian; even Weber, for all his vision, could not shake himself free of the conventions, and the librettists, every one of them, were more of a hindrance than a help.

The modern poets and composers must, at any rate for the next few years, accept the financial and material resources of Covent Garden and Sadler’s Wells, and they must accept the arrangement by which performances begin at seven and must be over by ten. Do our composers take the trouble to time their works accurately with a metronome by simple arithmetic? I have known very few musicians willing to employ this method; it is tedious and irksome, but I fancy it is far safer than playing a work through on the pianoforte and looking at one’s watch. The natural tendency of the fluent pianist is to hurry; the metronome forces one to think out the exact *tempo* required on the stage. The exact *tempo* of any opera must, of course, vary according to the size of the theatre, but we can at any rate obtain an approximate average estimate.

If possible, let us plan our opera in three acts, allowing for two intervals of fifteen minutes each at Sadler’s Wells and twenty at Covent Garden. An audience needs refreshment, and many people nowadays are forced to depend on bar and coffee-room for their entire evening meal; in a full house this takes some time to secure. This is a really important matter, because an audience which is tired and hungry will not enjoy the opera very much. We must consider the length of each act; if they are not equal, it is best to have the longest in the middle and the shortest

at the end. Four short acts are preferable, if necessary, to two long ones. If possible let us avoid any change of scenery within an act; if changes are indispensable they must be planned so as to be made instantaneously, without waits. A wait in semi-darkness, even if of only four or five minutes, induces the audience to talk and to begin discussing the opera, or more likely the singers; if the wait is longer, it suggests that something has gone wrong. These things are prejudicial to any opera and still more so to one that is being produced for the first time. With all due respect to Wagner, musical interludes are a nuisance, though I must make an exception in the case of Bizet, who seems to be an exception to every rule. Some young composers love interludes, because in these they can let themselves go and write what they like; they are further tempted to make the interludes the noisiest parts of their opera, because there is no risk of drowning singers. The critics sometimes pronounce the interludes to be the best parts; and no criticism of an opera could be more damning. A noisy interlude leaves the audience too much exhausted to pay proper attention to what follows.

All these perhaps prosaic necessities ought to be discussed and planned before the detail work of composition is even begun; if the poet and composer are too much inspired to give consideration to them, the conductor and producer will do their job for them and do it ruthlessly, and that will lead to stormy scenes, as the history of opera only too often teaches us. Besides, poet and composer ought from the beginning to have a visual conception of what their opera is to look like on the stage at every moment. Scene-designers, even if they read the opera beforehand, are much inclined to paint a picture of the stage as it may be when the curtain rises on an act, without considering how it will look in the course of the act, and what is still more important—how it will look at the end. The beginning and the end are vital; the first rise of the curtain must set the atmosphere for the whole work, and the final tableau as the curtain falls is the memory which the audience will take home with them. It is useful—and for producers essential—after a certain progress has been made, to jump straight to the end and then work backwards. Poet and composer might help the producer considerably by doing the same thing. It is quite impossible to separate the words and music of an opera from the scenery and action; an opera can only be thought of as a complete whole in action on the stage. No dress can be designed without the designer knowing exactly what the singer will have to do while wearing it.

Shall our opera be history, tragedy or comedy? (Under 'history' I include all plots of a narrative or chronicle character, sometimes covering a long period of years.) 'All three', says the young composer, 'and it *must* have an important part for a dramatic contralto because I want Miss Blank to sing in it'. If Miss Blank is what worries you most, I say good-bye; worry you she will, and everybody else too, if she does not fly off to sing at New York before your opera can be staged in London. Even without her, it is a fatal temptation to young composers—Mozart included—to try to put too much into one opera. *Idomeneo* had to be cut down at rehearsal, *Euryanthe* again and again after the first night. The sudden and incongruous irruption of comedy into tragedy can be delightful, as Shakespeare

knew well; but it has its practical drawbacks, even in Shakespeare. How often have we seen the rhythmical flow of a Shakespeare play destroyed because some fruity and famous old comedian with what Corney Grain used to call a 'syrupy' voice takes his time over the humours of Bottom or Trinculo! If the composer happens to like the fruity and syrupy old *basso* the disruption will be even worse in opera. And since drama set to music is forced to move more slowly than drama spoken, the seven-to-ten limit may leave no time for the full development of the important characters and situations.

The first and indeed perpetual aim of the poet must be clarity—clarity of plot, clarity of language and clarity of single words in sound as well as sense. In many of the older operas someone has to relate a long and complicated story to explain what happened before the curtain rises on the first act. *Il Trovatore* is the classic example; the absurdity of its plot is notorious, but if we have heard and understood what Ferrando has to say in the first scene, the rest ought to be perfectly clear. The ballad or *romance* is a conventional technique; Senta derived hers from old French opera, and that led Wagner on to the interminable long stories of that old *raconteur* Wotan. Modern play-writing ought to have solved the problem more happily for a librettist of to-day. Even *The Magic Flute* could teach him something; the plot is always considered nonsense, but at any rate no character has to go into tedious explanations, except perhaps Papageno in his first song. Gilbert's autobiographers may be tiresome, but they are at least caricatures of more classical offenders like Rossini's Figaro. However, the public seems to adore them; so if you want to write a commercial opera, put one in.

Clarity of language is urgent, because even with the best—that is, the most intelligent—singers words are inevitably somewhat obscured by music; besides, an audience has to take in two different things simultaneously. There is not much room in any opera for fine poetry; the composer is expected to provide the equivalent of that. The poet should limit his vocabulary to the simplest and most natural words. These principles, and others yet to be mentioned, are borne in upon one at every bar in the experience of making opera translations, and that is why I have suggested that any English librettist should make some translations by way of preliminary training. All words that are obscure, unfamiliar or aggressively poetical must be rigorously excluded, and this to a real poet may be a painful self-sacrifice. Yet our own great poets have often achieved it, even without the compulsion of music. A libretto is no task to undertake carelessly; it may prove harder than writing a good play in verse. The original librettist has at least this advantage over the poor translator that he is not forced into awkward inversions for the sake of a rhyme, nor need rhyme lead him, as it has led many older librettists, to put in lines which have little meaning and no dramatic value. In a libretto every word and every sentence ought to have definite dramatic value and contribute something to the development of the complete tragedy or comedy.

A poet who writes a play ought to recite every word aloud to himself as if he were on the stage, to find out whether his line is easy to articulate and effective in sound. The same applies to the librettist, and in his case he must sing his words

too, to any tune that comes into his head as long as it has something like a suitable emotional value. The sound-values of words are vitally important in opera, not only because some words may be difficult to sing, but because the mere sound of a word may convey an emotional value on the top of that which is conveyed by the sense of it. This applies to all spoken words, as we know from daily conversation; in a musical setting these values may be very greatly enhanced and intensified. Neither poet nor composer must leave these things to instinct; they must both know exactly what they are doing, what they want to do, and how to do it. All that is merely normal technique, as it is for a concert pianist and ought to be for a singer too; if technique is inadequate the result is untidy; and untidiness is what English opera chiefly suffers from in almost every department. The poet need not be afraid of difficult rhythms; Weber indeed deliberately asked his poetess for them, because they stimulated his dramatic imagination. But the poet must avoid difficult combinations of consonants, and in lyrical passages he must remember that English is a *legato* language, like French, and unlike German. He must prefer consonants which can be sung through, and avoid as far as is reasonable hard S, F and hard TH. He must study the values of stress and quantity, and especially the difficulties of words such as *stretch*, where the vowel is short, but the consonants require time to bring out. *Stretch* (and worse still, *stretch'd*) is a useful dramatic word, but it cannot be sung to a short note, and it cannot be stretched to a really long one. It is a curious fact that a great many English words that are rich in poetic evocation contain either inconvenient long vowels (*sleep, dream*) or definitely short ones (*memory*). *Memory* is perhaps the most evocative word in our language; an actor may learn to say it slowly in a generally slow *tempo*, but a singer cannot lengthen any vowel without destroying the sense-effect of it. Such words are problems for the English composer rather than the English poet; as an exercise let him set Shelley's lyric, *Music when soft voices die*, as if it were a song in an opera.

Is our libretto to be in verse or prose? The answer to-day will no doubt be 'free verse' or 'poetical prose'—much the same thing. Some poets may need reminding that in an opera typography will not help them; it is no use printing substantives with capitals and alternate verses in italics, still less cutting up prose into short lines. Rhymed verse in familiar metres suggests old-fashioned melody, which no composer to-day will want to write; it belongs to a time when all music was based on a general scheme of eight-bar blocks.¹ The modern composer may do his best with awkward intervals and dissonant harmonies, but if the rhythm is Gilbert's his music will only sound like Sullivan gone very much astray. It has often been said that modern music proceeds on the lines of prose and that 'verse' is a thing of the past; but this is a dangerous theory to work on. Metrical poetry of the highest order (at any rate in drama) can be written in verse, as Racine showed, on the smallest and simplest vocabulary; but free verse and poetical prose seem inevitably to demand an unusual choice of words, which is exactly what an opera

¹ In case any musician feels quarrelsome over this summary simplification, let him refer to Riemann and Prout, who, I may remark, did not lay down immutable laws for the future but merely codified the normal practice of the past.

poet, as I have said, ought studiously to avoid. The looseness—or shall we say, the elasticity—of musical form in opera may thus easily degenerate into incoherency and dullness.

An English poet tends naturally towards blank verse for drama, but blank verse may tempt the poet into useless padding, and the composer into a dragging sort of rhythm, whether in dramatic or lyrical passages. Only a master like Shakespeare can use blank verse with a rich variety of pace and expression. Some actors exaggerate the metre of blank verse, others systematically ignore it and concentrate on the sense; I wonder if any of them ever practise reciting a long stretch merely as sound, disregarding sense, at various speeds and in various styles, so as to find out how much dramatic expression can be produced by sound alone. I recall an entertainer whom I once heard preach an impassioned sermon (certainly a caricature) by simply reciting the alphabet over and over again. Exercises of this type are the daily bread of concert pianists, playing scales or arpeggios at various rates and in various schemes of colour.

Let us turn to the composers. The first temptation of the modern composer is to express himself in the orchestra instead of in the voices; one can even see sometimes that he is always thinking of himself as a conductor. But his first duty is to think of himself not as a singer, but as each real character of the drama—as Ophelia her real self, not as Miss Blank in the leading soprano part. He is always wanting to forget the stage and write concert music. Even Mozart did that sometimes, and it is no excuse for undramatic music to say that it is a fugue or a *passacaglia* or a set of variations. All these things can come into an opera if occasion arises out of the drama, just as well as a march or a waltz; but they have no virtue in themselves. Many composers have thought that the ideal libretto should have as many occasions as possible for 'pieces of music' such as serenades, pieces, that is, which would be pieces of music if inserted into a spoken play. Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* is a conspicuous example. A very short story is padded out with quantities of utterly unnecessary music that contributes nothing to the drama, and the very scanty drama is heavily overweighted by them. A critic said recently that modern opera ought to be based on psychology and the development of character rather than on outward happenings. Development of character takes place in *The Magic Flute*, *Faust* and *Eugene Onegin*—at least it ought to do so; but the composers, having some particular singer in mind, often want to employ her at her full power from beginning to end. Tatyana ought to begin as an inexperienced girl of seventeen and end as a mature woman of the world; but her Letter Song in Act I requires a singer of ripe experience.

The modern composers seldom fall into this trap, for they are not sufficiently interested in voices. They know all about the modern orchestra and have every orchestral *cliché* at their fingers' ends, but when they write for voices they hardly even know the *clichés* and seem quite helpless. There was a parallel situation two hundred and fifty years ago, noted by critics of the time; Scarlatti had the subtlest sense of vocal expression but was embarrassed and awkward when he wrote for instruments; Vivaldi's concertos are brilliant and original while his operas are utterly dull. Perhaps we must wait fifty years for a new Mozart to achieve a

synthesis. The orchestra tempts composers away from the stage, because the orchestra can make so much more noise, and they think that a crash in the orchestra can be a substitute for passionate vocal melody. Regular arias one naturally does not expect in these days; they would be quite out of place. Yet our composers often think they must put a few in, so as to provide something suitable for a gramophone record; it always stands out incongruously. All opera, however modern, must be a mixture of recitative and aria of some kind, that is of dramatic and lyrical moments; it is the 'recitative' which exposes the moderns at their worst.

Old Italian recitative ran on as quickly as it could, to tell the story in a close approximation to speech, and I incline to think (in default of any contemporary rules) that Scarlatti meant the chords of the *continuo* to be played *with* the voice and not after it, and that it was only later in that century that the method of Mr. Skimpole was adopted, playing chords like commas and full stops. By Rossini's time the singers are expected to sing the recitative rather than to speak it; the orchestra takes over the punctuation marks, and the clauses become more and more widely spaced, in view of large voices in large theatres, and the punctuation louder. Instead of commas, we now have marks of exclamation—indeed we see them printed in the librettos, as if the poet said, 'This line really *is* dramatic, though you might not think it!' In modern opera these exclamation-marks become explosions, to the great delight of conductors. But besides splitting the ears of the audience they hold up the rhythm and with it the drama, as well as exaggerating emotional values out of all proportion. Scarlatti's recitatives move quite happily and fluently in regular common time; modern conductors say that all recitative is *senza tempo*. The result is that the recitative passages often cease to be *music* at all. Music must have continuity and flow; metre may be old-fashioned now, but rhythm of some sort there must be.

As I have given the poets the key-word *clarity*, so I would ask the composers for *continuity*. In any opera we want to feel when the curtain rises that we have got into the train at King's Cross and we shall not stop until we reach York at the end of the first act. Modern opera stops not at the intermediate wayside stations, but between them. Recitative may be freer than it used to be, but the composer must know exactly which notes he wants 'spoken' and which 'sung'. *Rigoletto* would teach him much if he would read the score note by note and word by word, as a translator has to do, instead of listening to gramophone records of celebrated singers. Since Italian and German recitative has for centuries been written in common time, the English composer instinctively does the same thing, never having studied the recitatives of Lully and Rameau. We cannot imitate them, for English prosody is utterly different from French, but we might learn something from them. Our composers study sometimes very carefully the scores of modern foreign operas, and they pick up *clichés* of foreign recitative and foreign singers' habits of making stage effects without asking themselves whether these things are appropriate to poetry in English. An English opera must be based on the natural rhythms of the English language. A translator has to use all his ingenuity to make an audience think that some foreign composer wrote his opera to the English words; and an English composer needs ingenuity as well as inspiration to set English words

intelligently to music. There is no reason why recitative should always be in common time. Stanford taught me that if you want to get over the ground quickly, three-four time will serve better than four-four.

The conductor-mind tempts composers to begin phrases just after a first beat; the singer has to wait for the conductor to say 'go' before he dare start. Blank verse encourages this too. This is a perpetual drag on the singer and therefore on the drama; the cart is always before the horse. The character of the drama (and not the singer of the rôle) sings to express his emotions; it is he who takes the lead, while the orchestra may support and help to intensify those emotions. When Samson feels strong the horn plays a *leitmotiv*; in practice the horn plays it and the singer suddenly remembers that he has got to pull himself together and look strong—whereas the first thing should be Samson's interior consciousness of strength, the next his muscular reaction to it, and that must *cause* the horn to play his theme. If Samson did not feel strong the horn would not play it; that is the impression Saint-Saëns wishes the audience to have. The only business of a conductor is to see that the orchestra keeps together and follows the lead of the singer. I need hardly say this principle will not be approved by any *Herr Generalmusikdirektor*. But it would certainly have been approved by Monteverdi; in his operas the singer is compelled to shoulder the responsibility of creating the rhythm.

Wagner generally avoided *ensembles*; the quintet in *Meistersinger* makes a pretty *tableau* but is quite static and undramatic. The modern reaction towards Verdi tempts some English composers to write *ensembles*; but however pleasant the general sound-effect may be, the singer who has only a harmonic filling-up part is dramatically dead and ceases to exist. If all four or five characters are in complete agreement, it may pass, like a duet in thirds; but can we nowadays tolerate four or five characters each expressing utterly different feelings in block harmony like a hymn-tune? Modern music cannot go back to the technique of Mozart and Auber. The chorus is another problem. Here again our composers, contrapuntal to the extreme for instruments, revert constantly to block harmony; have they never looked at the brawl-chorus in Act II of *Meistersinger*? Do they not realize that an English opera chorus of to-day can learn anything, however complex, in the way of counterpoint? Our choruses are our greatest asset; we might well learn from Mussorgsky that the chorus, representing a nation, may well be the real hero of a musical drama. But apart from rare exceptions, our composers have little feeling for the personality of a chorus, or at best treat it as if they were writing oratorio. Some even treat it as if it were a harmonium.

No one can teach the poet or composer how to write a really modern English opera; they have to find that out for themselves. It is easy enough to write a commercial opera; but to the credit of our young composers of to-day not one of them, as far as my experience goes, seems to want to do that. They are, I am convinced, as wildly idealistic as the old romantic Germans of Weber's time; I only hope I might be able to help them a little by pointing out the technical errors into which their inspiration tempts them to fall. They must take example by the pianists and not be ashamed of practising their Czerny.

MUSIC IN NORTH INDIA

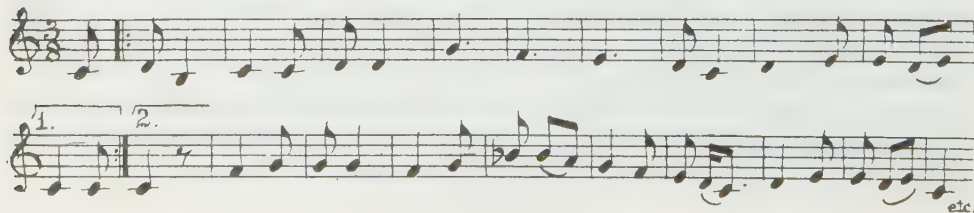
Imogen Holst

Learning about Indian music from textbooks is a perplexing occupation; there are several scholarly treatises published in English which describe the history and theory of the *ragas* of classical Indian music in great detail, but at a distance of several thousand miles it is difficult to imagine what a *raga* sounds like. Gramophone records can be a help, but they become silent just when one wants to begin asking questions. Last winter I was fortunate enough to spend two months as a student in the Music Department at Santiniketan University in West Bengal. My Indian hosts were dismayed at the thought of anyone coming to study for so short a time, but they were most generous in their efforts to teach me. They certainly taught me more than I learnt at the All-India Music Conference in Calcutta where the concerts got entangled in political speeches and the singing and playing had to be amplified owing to the size of the cinema in which the meetings were held. Indian music is not intended for large buildings; it is meant for an ordinary room with everyone sitting round on the floor.

Santiniketan, the University founded by Tagore, is in the depths of the country; one could sit outside the music studios in the hot winter sunshine, listening to the various classes which began at 7 o'clock every morning. Everything was taught by rote; the same fragment would be sung over and over again, or played on the plucked Sitar or the bowed Esraj. (There was no woodwind; I had to go to a wedding reception in Calcutta to hear the Sanayi, a resonant double-reed instrument combining the far-reaching insistence of the bagpipe with the expressive melancholy of the English horn and the delicate flexible pianissimo of the oboe.)

At first the sounds coming from the windows of the Santiniketan music studios were so startlingly unfamiliar that I found it difficult to write down what I was hearing, even though it was only a single line of melody. Tagore's own songs were comparatively easy to get hold of; he often borrowed traditional Bengali tunes that he had heard the boatmen singing on the river. My teachers let me begin on one of the simplest:—

Ex 1



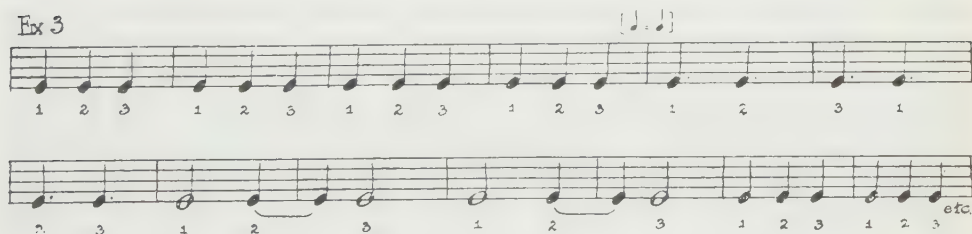
There were also folk-songs from hill villages in the Punjab; pentatonic tunes which would have sounded equally at home in the Brendon hills of Somerset or the Appalachian mountains of Kentucky:—

Ex. 2



The difficulty began when it came to listening to the drum rhythms, which sounded very elaborate at first hearing. The different time patterns mean as much to Indian musicians as harmony means to us. Each orthodox rhythm has its own name, with a fixed grouping of units. The learner is encouraged to clap his hands on the main beats, but I found the rhythms bewildering to follow, even after being told that a particular rhythm had fourteen units divided into four alternating groups of three or four units, with three main beats occurring on the first, fourth, and eleventh units. This time pattern might remain unchanged for half an hour on end, but it would seldom sound the same, owing to the subtlety of the phrasing, the absence of anything approaching a 'thump' on the first beat of what we should call a bar, and the remarkable ease with which the drummer improvised variations on his main time pattern, by using unexpected accents and complicated cross-rhythms. These varied drum rhythms did not suffer from the restlessness of some of the European instrumental music of the mid-nineteen-twenties, where the frequent changes of time signature often left the listener with nothing to hang on to. Indian rhythms manage to combine an exuberant freedom of invention with the strictest adherence to an underlying discipline, and the ignorant listener, if lost, can fall back on counting. Even when the speed of the counting varies, there will always be a dependable arrival on a main beat, as I learnt from the following fragment, where the hand clapping always occurred on the first beat of every bar:—

Ex 3



It was helpful to be allowed to listen to the drum rhythms for the classes in Manipuri dancing, where the main beats were marked by the striking of a pair of small cymbals, about two inches in diameter (perhaps the original 'tinkling cymbal' of St. Paul's Epistle?). No melodic instrument was used, but the dancers memorized their steps while saying aloud the different 'syllables' that were spelt out by the drummer, syllables such as '*Dhin*', '*Dhi*', or '*Ta*', for a crotchet, '*Naka*', '*Ghi-na*', or '*Ka-ta*', for two quavers, and '*Tirakita*' for four semi-quavers. By choosing different positions on the surface of the drum and by using different methods of touch with his fingers or the palm of his hand, the drummer could make his instrument 'speak' these syllables so that they were easily

distinguishable. At the end-of-term examinations the dance students were asked to listen to a fragment of the drummer's rhythm and then dance the bit that belonged to it.

During the examinations I discovered that even the most advanced music students found sight-reading and dictation very difficult, for they rely almost entirely on learning by ear. Some of them find it a burden to have to learn their notation, but they are lucky to possess it—in Thibet, classical music is in danger of disappearing because musicians have taken it for granted that it would always be possible for their tradition to be passed down from teacher to pupil.

Indian notation is very simple. The names of the notes are taken from the first syllables of seven Sanskrit words: these names, corresponding to our *Ut, re, mi*, etc., are *Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni*. They are written:—

Ex. 4

स र ग म प ध न

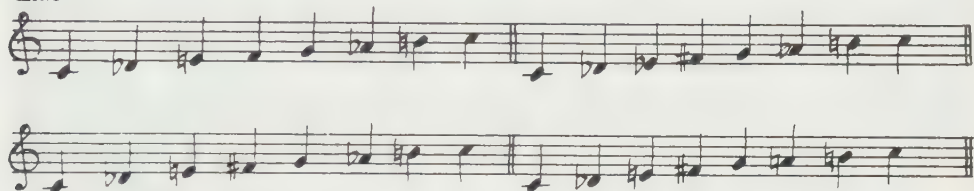
Sa is always the tonic, but it is not fixed at an unalterable level of pitch. Singers can choose the level that is most comfortable for them. Notes that are an octave higher or lower have a dot above or below them. Notes that are sharpened or flattened have a line above or below them. *Sa* and *Pa* are always natural: *Ma* can be sharpened: *Ri, Ga, Dha, and Ni* can be flattened. This simple system of notation, however, is not sufficient in itself to indicate the many subtle grace notes and trills and slides which have to be learnt by rote.

Two months was not nearly long enough to begin to learn about such subtleties as these. But, hearing Indian music all day, every day, it was long enough to get rid of preconceived notions of what it ought to sound like, and to avoid being haunted by false associations. The perpetually anchored tonic was fairly easy to get used to; it was only during the first couple of days that I pined for a modulation; by the end of a week I could listen to the four-stringed *Tampura* repeating its *Sa* for two-and-a-half hours on end without wishing it would stop. It was much more difficult trying to get used to the 'scoop' which every singer or player indulged in. On the *Sita*, where the strings are pulled a fourth or fifth out of focus in order to produce the desired effect, the scoop was so reminiscent of a Hawaiian film in technicolor that at first hearing I found myself blushing all over. On the bowed *Esraj* it took even longer to get used to because the long notes in between the scoops were scraped with the rigid determination usually associated with elementary string classes at their most painful stage of progress. As for the singing—it was nearly a month before I got over the feeling that they were putting in scoops on purpose to be tiresome. Being a guest, I gave no hint of my discomfort, but one day one of my Indian friends sighed heavily and said, 'It is a pity your European singing is so unnatural'. After much questioning I found that he was referring to vibrato. 'We consider it to be regrettable', he said with downcast eyes. So I confessed that we found scooping equally regrettable. And I realized it was no good wanting to exchange the one for the other; it would have been just as useless as wanting to transform the hot stretch of pink sand in the banana grove into a frosty avenue of beech trees.

The scooping was never an added effect; it was an essential part of what the Indians call 'expression'. And to them expression is inseparable from the shape of the music; in fact, the two are the same thing.

The shape of their tunes depends on the choice of mode on which the tune is founded. They use modes corresponding to our Dorian, Æolian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, and Ionian, or major scale, which, for the last four hundred years, they have referred to as their 'natural' scale. They also use many other modes including:—

Ex. 5



Every mode has its own expression owing to the subtle changes of intonation in each scale; for instance, there will be several different levels of pitch in what we should call the minor third. The Indian octave can be divided into as many as sixty-six recognizable microtones, or *shrutis* as they are called, but for practical purposes twenty-two are used in teaching modal music. The division of the octave into *shrutis* is usually quoted as being one of the chief differences between Indian and European music, but in actual practice it is obvious that a sensitive European string player can make use of just as many different levels of pitch according to the needs of the harmonies he is playing. The real difference seems to be that the European relies more on instinct, while the Indian is firmly supported by theory. Indians are horrified when we say, 'a little sharper' or 'a bit flatter'. And they are appalled to hear us describe our scale of C major as having a tone between C and D and a tone between D and E; they find it incredible that we should call both these intervals a tone without mentioning that C to D is larger than D to E.

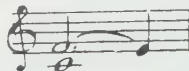
During a visit to Benares I was able to listen to the division of the octave into *shrutis* on the special organ which Alain Daniélou has invented for demonstration purposes. It was an illuminating experience to hear the four different Indian levels of F sharp over the perpetually held C; there seemed to be such an immense gap between each F sharp. And the relation between expression and intonation was clear and inevitable; the sharpest F sharp was used next to the flattest A flat in order that both might be drawn irresistibly towards the unchanging G.

It was also illuminating to listen to a B flat that was tuned to exactly the same level as the B flat of the harmonic series of C; all tension disappeared from the held seventh and the interval sounded very nearly as restful as a perfect fifth.

But the most exciting interval of all was the rarely used 'out-of-tune' F natural, which is considerably flatter than the perfect fourth above C. It can never occur in a rising phrase; it is only used when it is allowed to fall to E, for its uncomfortable level would be intolerable in any other context, to Eastern as well as to Western

ears. It was a revelation to listen to the sound of

Ex. 6



with a smaller fourth than usual. Instead of a perfect consonance with very little tension in it, attempting to resolve on to an imperfect consonance with considerably more tension, it was a true resolution of a dissatisfied discord.

At Benares University the music students work for nine years before they graduate. Learning by imitation is a slower process than any of our Western methods; an American singing teacher who had meant to spend a year in Benares gave up after the first four months because he was still being taught the same tune. The training is slow but there can be no doubt about its thoroughness. And what an admirable way of weeding out the unwanted before they become professionals!

The head of the music department, Pandit Thakur, is one of the great singers of India. His lessons were unforgettable; with immense vitality he took his small group of elementary first-year students through the same eight notes over and over again:—

Ex. 7

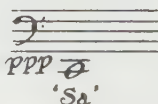


'Sa Ni Dha Ma Ga Ma Ga Sa'

It is impossible to describe the passionate conviction with which he sang this short phrase; by the tenth repetition it had banished the last of my doubts; the scoop was no longer a scoop, it had become beautiful and necessary; the relation between the tonic and each note of the scale was no longer of limited interest, it had become exciting enough to last a lifetime.

Pandit Thakur used many gestures while he taught; the energy with which he conveyed the rhythm to his half-dozen students would have carried a large symphony orchestra through a *con fuoco* climax. With his silver-white ringlets shaking on his shoulders, he would suddenly thrust his right hand towards a corner of the ceiling in order to place a *sforzando* B natural: the whole sentence would then be moulded with graceful gestures that seemed to be imploring his pupils to get right inside the flow of the music instead of remaining outside it; for the last falling low D flat he would gently stroke the air before offering the completed phrase to the surrounding silence. His voice, which was very beautiful, had an extraordinarily wide range: in his advanced class he triumphantly lifted a phrase up to fortissimo high C (the high C of the operatic tenor) and then, having cascaded downhill for a couple of octaves, he leaned downwards to the G below, leaned further downwards to touch the low E, and finally, after a long hush of expectancy, came to rest on a

Ex. 8



'Sa'

It was far more than a brilliant display of technique: it was, among other things, a lesson in composition, for the excitement of the high C had been so overwhelming that it needed the complete relaxation of the lowest C to balance it.

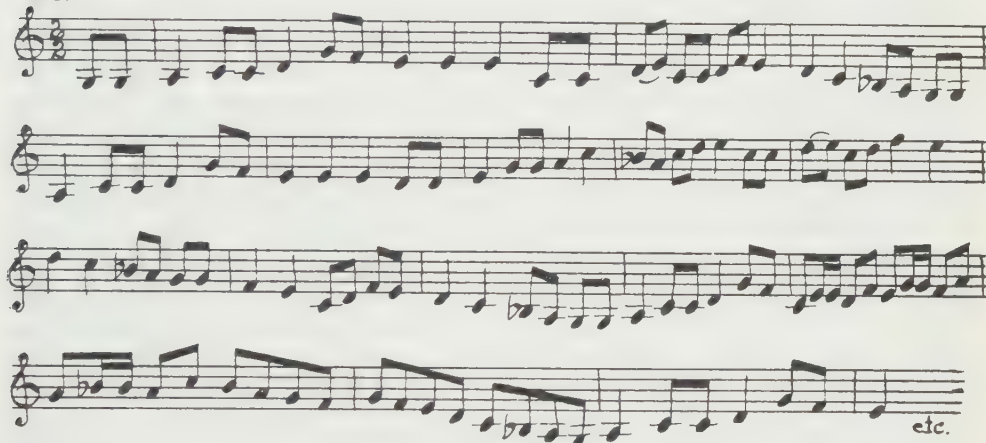
Listening to Pandit Thakur, one could anticipate what was going to happen next and it became possible to grasp some of the meaning of the word '*raga*'. Back at Santiniketan I heard a tune played on the Esraj:—

Ex 9



A few weeks earlier I had been taught a tune for the Sita which began:—

Ex 10



The tunes had been composed by different musicians, but it was possible to recognize that they both shared the characteristics of the *raga* called *Jhinjhoti*. A *raga* is a fixed order of notes taken from one of the modes. Each of these notes is dealt with in turn, the singer or player being free to improvise. In classical Indian music there is no dividing line between performer and composer—every singer or player has to compose, or there would be nothing for him to sing or play. And every composer has to be a performer if his compositions are ever to be heard.

The singer's improvisation is often doubled by a stringed instrument and it sometimes happens that a player gets several notes behind the singer, which means that one will be going up while the other is coming down. When this happens the European listener is apt to hear the sounds as two-part counterpoint in contrary motion, and before going to India I often wondered why this counterpoint had never been 'developed'. In Lucknow I asked the Principal of the National Academy of

Music about it and he said, 'Oh, we don't hear it in that way. You see, it's like a horse and cart, the one has to go behind the other, but they're both going together.'

Harmony in our sense of the word would be impossible in classical Indian music. But at Santiniketan I found them trying to put accompaniments to several of Tagore's songs. He himself had suggested these tunes might be harmonized and his pupils are now trying to keep a balance between experiment and tradition. The University is surrounded by traditions. Less than half a mile away there is an aboriginal village with traditions going back at least four thousand years, where the Santal men and women dance all night whenever there is a full moon; wisps of tunes from their bamboo flutes used to float across the rice fields every afternoon. And in the house where I was staying the eleven-year-old boy who helped in the kitchen would chant verses from the *Ramayana* every evening to the tune of:—

Ex 11



But Santiniketan is not only living on its traditions, it is also very much aware of changing social conditions. When large crowds meet together, their singing tends to become 'community singing' and they begin to demand an 'orchestra' to accompany them. How can one help them? Not by harmonizing their songs as if they were English tunes from the National Song Book. They themselves are anxious to learn about European music; on the last occasion when Ghandi visited them, he reminded them that they were an international university and advised them to include Western music as a subject in their curriculum. I found it a great responsibility having to teach them every day. ('To-morrow', the Principal of the Music School would suddenly announce, 'you will lecture to us on The History of European Dance'.) Getting them to sing rounds was comparatively simple, but when it came to advising them on harmonizing their own tunes I could only beg them not to inflict the usual heavy-handed *um-cha-cha* on their long-suffering piano.

The European influence is inevitable and it is impossible to see it in any sort of true perspective. The only obviously pernicious influence I came across was the small hand-harmonium introduced during the nineteenth century (tuned to equal temperament and utterly at war with every Indian scale), which still flourishes in many places in spite of Nehru's attempts to abolish it.

If Indians want to harmonize their tunes they will have to discover how to do it themselves instead of relying on ready-made imports from the West. Unfortunately most of the Indians who have been trained in European music have lost interest in their own traditions, while those who want to 'orchestrate' their own tunes have little to guide them except film music. The immediate future is not very hopeful. The young writers, painters, and architects I met in Calcutta were inclined to ask, 'But is there a future for Indian music? Surely it has come to a dead end, hasn't it?' I found it impossible to agree with them, remembering Pandit Thakur sitting cross-legged before his pupils in Benares, passionately singing the notes of the scale and delving over and over again into his limitless wealth of musical invention.

ADVICE TO YOUNG QUARTET-PLAYERS

André Gertler

The string quartet is still regarded by the majority of concert-goers as a particularly austere form of musical expression.

In point of fact this 'austerity' is a legend which by no means corresponds to reality. It is true that in any sphere, even in everyday life, most people are sooner attracted to what is facile and superficially brilliant than to what is simple and natural.

However, where music is concerned one could wish that an education, or rather a re-education, would take place, and that those responsible for organizing musical life would take their duties to heart. For it is quite false to suppose that a string quartet by Beethoven or Bartók is more abstract or impenetrable than any other masterpiece composed for different instruments. Great music will always be great music! I would almost go so far as to say that a masterpiece for string quartet, expressed therefore with the barest musical means, will touch the sensibility of the listener more directly and establish a closer contact with his mind than a musical work with fuller resources where certain artificialities may mislead.

Let those who doubt this statement ask themselves the question: What do we expect from art? That it should divert us, no matter how, or that it should upraise our souls and enrich our minds?

My most recent experiences among primitive peoples, gained only a few weeks ago in the Belgian Congo, have convinced me that the message of the great geniuses of music can be wonderfully assimilated by human beings whose appreciation has not yet been perverted by adverse influences.

I have played in the native cities of the Congo, before audiences composed of several hundred negroes, men, women, and children, before people naïve and uncultivated to our way of thinking. They were hearing for the first time in their lives the sound of the violin, the music of Bach, Mozart and Bartók. I shall always retain a most moving recollection of the concerts. These people heard me in a state of concentration that was quite extraordinary and which left me in no doubt of the immense joy that was theirs from contact with the great masterpieces of music.

I had the impression that my black listeners had been able to receive without the least difficulty the essential part of the message which the art of music can give. Indeed, I am firmly convinced that Art will remain always in all its simplicity a means of contact of incomparable richness.

But enough of general observations: I must confine myself in this essay to some ideas on the problems arising from the practice of the string quartet. How many young people there are in the world who intend to take up music as a profession without being truly conscious of the mission which they must later fulfil! Most of them are attracted by the artificial and dazzling side of our profession. They are prepared to work many hours a day in order to acquire a respectable virtuosity on their instrument, but are oblivious to any expression of poetry and humanity in music. It is recognized that the search for these things demands hard work throughout a lifetime and that the will alone is not always sufficient. But a truly humanistic education will aid the artist in his efforts and open to him ever wider horizons.

In studying instrumental virtuosity young artists should remember that it involves not only agility in rapid passages but also the perfecting of tone quality, which should, like the human voice, be capable of expressing every varying shade of feeling.

Here I would like to quote the great French violinist, Lucien Capet, who was the first person to gain applause in France for Beethoven's seventeen quartets:

'There is no doubt that many great interpreters have delighted their audiences without having developed a profound insight into music. But there is a difference between the interpretation of a concerto by Wieniawski and of one by Beethoven.

'In one all is on the surface, in the other all is inward. One is temporal, the other eternal. One is a form of amusement, the other a revelation. It seems to us certain that to interpret the Temporal needs less perfection of the artistic faculties than to interpret the Eternal; and that he who has chosen the way of amusement will not need to occupy himself with the profound. Development in the superficial will be enough for him.'

These lines were written in 1916; since then the intellectual standard of musicians has undoubtedly risen, thanks to the leadership of several great artists.

I recall having many times heard Alphonse Onnou, first violin of the admirable 'Pro Arte' quartet, express himself in these words:

'I am very pleased whenever I hear of the formation of a new quartet. I am pleased to see our ranks increase. But it remains to be seen in what spirit this new quartet will fulfil its mission.'

In every way, experience in chamber music and especially in quartet-playing cannot fail to benefit those who devote themselves to it, both as executants and interpreters. For chamber music demands a relentless discipline.

A discipline of quartet-playing freely undergone will make us more aware of any exaggeration, of any excess of feeling, and will bring us to a climate propitious to the expression of musical ideas; everything will appear in juster and truer proportions.

As in every other field, there has been a considerable development in recent years in the technique of quartet-playing. Formerly the string quartet was practised chiefly by amateurs, and professionals only cultivated it occasionally, if at all; they did not keep to regular, daily, ensemble practice, as do present-day quartets.

Nevertheless, our delight would be unbounded if we could hear, even only once, one of those friendly quartet meetings held in Vienna in 1784, at which, so the historians assure us, Joseph Haydn played first violin, Dittersdorf second violin, and Mozart viola.

The credit of forming the first professional quartet to play in public, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, goes to Schuppanzigh in Vienna. Since that time quartets have been formed almost everywhere in the world, but there certainly used not to be enough, and that is, I think, one of the reasons why the string quartet remained for a long time the privilege of a select few.

When I was young I had the opportunity of conversing with a great admirer of the Hungarian violinist and quartet-player, Joachim. Thus I learned that Joachim used to have one quartet in Germany, where he lived, and another in England. Whenever a concert was to be given in England he made the journey there alone. I have not been able to verify the accuracy of this statement, but if it can be considered at all reliable, the inference to be drawn from it is that the standard of ensemble must have suffered drastically and have been far below that to which we are accustomed to-day. . . .

Clearly this essay of mine cannot be a handbook on the art of the string quartet. How, in fact, can fixed rules be laid down on a subject into which so much that is incalculable enters? And what end would it serve? Nothing can take the place of personal experience.

I remember Bartók's reply to a young composer who wanted to take lessons from him:

'I do not give lessons in composition, because I cannot give what I consider does not exist. Write, work, develop self-criticism, and study the great masterpieces.'

This, of course, is the fundamental viewpoint of a creative genius, and, moreover, it must be remembered that Bartók was emphasizing the value of working alone and of discovering for oneself, for someone already in possession of a certain technical equipment.

However, the problem is not quite the same for an interpretative artist.

In composition, the means of expression are inseparable from the personality of the composer, who has to find his own idiom.

In interpretation, one must have the ability to assimilate the idiom of others, and, added to that, sufficient technique to express one's understanding with great flexibility according to the subject in hand.

The manner in which each piece is interpreted must be the result of mature reflection; rigid theories can be no guide.

Individual instrumental technique

The virtuosity called for to resolve the problems arising in the course of a quartet-player's career is very great. For one thing, the technical mastery of the instrument must be infinitely more studied than in the case of the virtuoso who presents himself as a soloist. There is much less nervous strain in playing solo virtuoso passages (where you are master of your own wishes and are drawn forward by your own impetus) than to execute difficult passages under the control of an objective discipline imposed by the laws of quartet-playing.

I have noticed that many remarkable violinists, who play virtuoso music with *brío*, find themselves embarrassed when confronted with the simple arpeggio in C major at the end of the Trio in Beethoven's second quartet.

For the violinist with a faultless bow technique the performance of Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo* presents fewer difficulties than that of the Scherzo in Beethoven's seventh quartet. In the *Moto Perpetuo*, a single note played a fraction too soon or too late, for greater convenience in changing strings or position, would not lower the level of the performance, while in the Scherzo just mentioned the same divergence would risk spoiling the essential character of the music.

Again, a virtuoso may take liberties in accordance with his personal facility (and these liberties will vary with his mood), while a quartet-player must subordinate himself to a well-considered conception, and above all one accepted by his partners.

The quartet player must possess, in the first place, a technique that is perfect and at the same time conscious to the last degree. He must be capable of producing the most diverse variations of tone-colour with his vibrato: contrary to the ideas of some of the foremost quartet-players, who never vary their vibrato, using always the same, very often a rapid one, which gives their tone a standardized quality.

Ensemble Technique

A. Tempo

In general it should be borne in mind that metronome indications only reflect the composer's intentions approximately; a metronome is fallible, for one thing, the composer's no less than our own. It is not unusual to find two with different beats.

When I was practising Bela Bartók's second string quartet for the first time, I was confronted with a problem when I discovered that the metronome indications did not correspond to what I believed to have been the composer's intentions. I had had the extreme good fortune of working with this great master (from the age of eighteen I had had the privilege of playing with Bartók in sonata recitals) and

I had gradually been able to gain a fairly intimate idea of his intentions. Thus the metronome marks of his second quartet brought me to a veritable *impasse*. Very worried, I decided to write and ask his advice. Several days later I had a reply from Budapest. I was very pleased to learn that Bartók intended to alter the markings of the entire quartet. The same was found necessary for his first quartet. I received a three-page list of alterations.¹

Bartók had discovered that the metronome he had used at the time had been faulty.

Besides, there is, in my opinion, no such thing as absolute and strict time. Time is like a pulse, and each person may have a different pulse. A quick movement must be played at a lively pace, but it is always the music itself which will determine whether it should be gay or robust, joyous or furious, and so on.

If the ensemble is of faultless clarity, a quick movement may be taken at less than the tempo indicated and still sound quicker than an over-hasty performance; for haste destroys the impression of speed. All exaggeration is unnatural, and it is towards naturalness that we must aim.

In slow movements, too, the choice of tempo sets several difficult problems. Here the composer may intend an effect of calm, or of serenity, or of melancholy. But we must be careful to avoid giving an impression of dragging, as that would, by its exaggeration, destroy the sense of continuity.

Andantes are usually played much too slowly. The meaning of the word is not 'slow', but 'at a walking pace'.² There might be an exception in the case of a movement where the composer's object had been to create an atmosphere of monotony. But this atmosphere would often be better suggested if we were to bring into use all the means of expression within our power, instead of merely taking too slow a tempo.

If, after many efforts, we do not feel at home in a tempo, it is better not to persist, because in doing so we risk becoming more tense and losing all spontaneity.

May I be allowed to relate a little anecdote in connexion with this point?

I was quite a young quartet-player when my quartet received an invitation to play before a well-known French chamber music society. The directors of this society asked us to play Mozart's quartet in B flat major (K.589). My quartet had for a long time been undecided about the choice of a tempo for the first movement. On the day of the concert, the president of the society welcomed us warmly in the artists' room. He expressed his pleasure at having at last an opportunity of hearing this relatively little-played quartet. He told us that he

¹ The photostat of this list is in the possession of Boosey and Hawkes, the publishers, to whom I made a point of sending them. These indications are very important and change the whole aspect of the work.

² Literally, 'going'.

himself played in an amateur quartet together with the vice-president, the secretary and the treasurer of the society.

To our consternation we learned that he had asked for this quartet to be included in our programme after long and fruitless discussions as to the tempo of the first movement. In short, he wanted to have the issue clearly decided and to end the argument by submitting to the ripe judgment of a 'professional quartet'. We glanced at each other anxiously. In the silence that followed, by what happy inspiration I know not, I forced myself to overcome my timidity and asked him what was the tempo that he personally favoured. In reply he good-humouredly sang us the first bars of the movement, so spontaneously and convincingly, that an exchange of significant smiles was sufficient to decide us to adopt *his* tempo.

May I add that our dear president was vindicated before his quartet. He had been right! Though at the time he was unaware of the secret of his success, I did not neglect to tell him some years later. . . .

With reservations, then, as to the absolute accuracy of the metronome, I cannot sufficiently recommend its use. It reveals our mistakes and puts us all in agreement without argument. The result is a considerable saving of time in every respect.

It is sometimes very difficult in a slow movement to choose a tempo that can be maintained successfully all through. In an *Adagio* movement, for example, the tempo adopted may be suitable to the first theme while proving impracticable in the course of the development. This problem frequently confronts us in Haydn, who gives the first violin figurations in semi- and demi-semiquavers. If these smaller note-values were to give the *Adagio* the character of a rather quicker movement, then in my opinion there would be reason to reconsider the initial tempo. In trying to maintain one tempo throughout such a slow movement, I have made the following experiment: I have taken, to begin with, a small section of the passage in short note-values, which I have tried to play as calmly as possible, keeping the opening theme in mind at the same time. By this method the two elements have been fused in my imagination and I have had, in consequence, no difficulty in preserving the unity of tempo. But we must beware, in correcting one error, that we do not fall into another, and slacken the tempo excessively.

The same check can be made on the tempo of a quick movement, where the long notes must still have the pace necessary to accord with the lively spirit of the piece.

Fluctuations of tempo in the course of a movement, unless indicated by the composer, are, to my mind, harmful.

There are certain works where it is not at all easy to keep to one tempo. The first movement of Mozart's quartet in D minor (K.421) is an instance of a problem which is particularly delicate from this point of view. Many times I have heard excellent quartets taking the first theme at a fairly brisk tempo, and finding themselves obliged, when they reached the second, to make a big change in the

tempo, thus slowing the movement down a great deal. I cannot accept this as a solution because the abrupt change brutally destroys the unity of the piece.

In my opinion, two things are imperative:

(1) Let us preserve the 'singing' character of the first theme (the accompanying quavers should be played without rigour), and this will lead us to take it at a moderate and comfortable tempo.

(2) Let us reserve for the second theme a feeling of calm and serenity while not losing the unity of tempo.

In this way the notes will flow on naturally and without interruption, quickly but not precipitously. I do not underestimate the difficulties of this form of musical architecture.

In the second movement of the same quartet the problem of tempo presents itself differently. This lovely music does not allow the least rigidity. The note-values can be drawn out occasionally without upsetting the general tempo. At the end of a sentence or phrase, a slight *calmando* will give more flexibility to the interpretation. But we run grave risks if we do not take care to pick up the initial tempo again immediately. All the freshness and the unity of the music will otherwise be lost, and instead of exquisite tenderness we shall impart a feeling of greyness, and what is worse, of meaningless sentimentality.

Before turning to my next point, I cannot advise too strongly against increasing the tempo in crescendos and slowing it down in diminuendos.

B. Rhythm

As we have seen, to be able to sustain a single tempo throughout a movement is often one of the greatest difficulties for beginners. We must assimilate and master the substance of the music without allowing ourselves to be carried away by it. We must have great lucidity, as in all artistic creation.

I have often noticed that some artists use far too much accentuation. Certainly, when the piece demands a very sharp accentuation and the music is of an exceptional vitality, we should not, above all, be too modest. Even so, distinctness in the left hand and the right will produce more vigour, more strength, and more rhythmic character than accents too rough and jerky, which will serve rather to lessen the desired effect.

C. Tone and dynamics

It is obvious that the tone quality of a quartet cannot be good unless each of its members has excellent tone. It is of the utmost importance that the four different strands of sound should combine into a homogeneous ensemble. It is impossible to achieve this if the tone-production is not uniform either in style or in volume. What a problem it would be to blend a very slow vibrato with a very quick one, for instance, or a very small tone with a very full one!

But I will pass over these elementary questions in order to come to one which seems to me important.

Do not use fingerings in unduly high positions unless it is absolutely necessary. The soloist chooses his fingerings according to his natural inclination. In the quartet, however, each strand of sound must be integrated with the rest. How will this be achieved if, for example, in a harmonic progression in which the parts move together in equal note-values, three players use low positions, and the fourth (who, without wishing to give offence, is often the first violin) plays high up on the G string, although the same note would obviously sound more freely on the D or A string? It goes without saying that a long string has more resonance than a short one. This is one of the reasons why it is important to adjust fingerings judiciously. There is another point which seems to me very important: one often hears *forte* passages exaggerated (in Haydn's quartets this causes real disasters), in absolute contradiction to the spirit of the music. On the other hand, we must somehow contrive to play *piano* passages in firm contact with the string, so that the tone does not lose its beauty and become scratchy. Often one hears nothing but the scraping of resin. Even when the composer asks for *senza colore* the tone needs a hint of vibrato, such as will give it precisely the effect of *senza colore* (for instance in the fourth movement of Bartók's sixth quartet, in the violin and 'cello parts). If a painter wishes to obtain the effect of a horizon disappearing from sight he does not therefore leave part of his canvas bare.

The *sforzando* must be a definite accent but have depth of resonance. This will be achieved if the vibrato is begun with force immediately after the bow's attack; there is otherwise a risk of not distinguishing between *sforzando* and *forte-piano*.

Very often it is necessary to resort to a collective system of dynamics, as it were, in which the tone-schemes are not in the same scale. In a passage where the general effect is *forte*, and where, for example, the 'cello has the leading part, supported by a flowing counterpoint in the first violin and harmonies in the second violin and viola parts, the levels of resonance must be very clearly defined in order to avoid a confused effect. Despite the total effect of *forte* the 'cello must stand out without having to force its tone; and this will only be possible, and the maximum clarity maintained still in *forte*, through the subtle adjustment of the other three instruments.

The rigorous observation of levels of tone becomes particularly necessary when playing a fugue. Quartet-players often make the mistake of bringing out only the subject: it appears now with one, now with another, of the instruments, while the working-out of the fugue is left in the background. . . .

I have the following advice to give in playing a crescendo. It should start very faintly and grow stronger only towards the end. In this way the desired psychological effect will be obtained. Otherwise we become inured to a prosaic and arithmetic increase of tone, and there is no longer a sense of climax but rather of a laborious and breathless ascent.

A crescendo written like this:



is not an indication, to my mind, of the way it should be played. Rather it should be written like this:



(But I admit the practical impossibility of bringing such signs into our musical notation.) Conversely, the same treatment applies to the diminuendo.

Yet another word, on marks of expression such as this:  so often used by Brahms.

Despite outward appearances, Brahms's art is modest, intimate, and extremely reserved. He was very fond of these expression marks. The 'literal' rendering of his signs leads to a turgidity which seems to me to be in direct contradiction to the spirit of his music. It is therefore advisable to regard them as hints of expression translating themselves as a momentarily increased intensity of tone, rather than as indications of dynamics.

D. Intonation

Intonation is one of the great difficulties of quartet-playing. The problem is delicate: each member of the quartet may have a different conception of exact intonation. It often happens at the outset of a quartet's career that individually its members play perfectly in tune, and yet the resulting ensemble is not satisfactory.

I cannot sufficiently recommend the practice of checking intonation two at a time when work begins (alternatively, in every possible combination, in scales and arpeggios). This process can be used later when there are unisons to be played.

Generally speaking, open strings should be mistrusted; since in the course of performance they may go out of tune, and cannot instantly be adjusted as stopped notes can.

Finally, it is essential to take into account our system of equal temperament. When the music spreads over a large register, the first violin, having the highest part, must not fail to play a little sharper than he would alone.

E. Various observations

I have often noticed, at quartet recitals, that the eyes of most of the audience seemed to be directed almost entirely to the first violin. This appearance of concentration on the leader of the quartet leads me to suppose that in this case the fixed gaze is only the result of an interest aroused first through the ears.

It is clear that the first violin's range, and the place he occupies on the platform, produce an error of judgment on the part of most listeners. They do not reflect that a quartet is like a living organism, in which each component part contributes in an important manner to the working of the whole ensemble.

It never occurs to someone watching a dancer to expect to understand the meaning of the dance through gazing at his face alone. All the movements of his body contribute to the expression of his art. Each element taken separately is capable of expression, but it is the proportion and harmony of all his movements that must make his interpretation fully alive.

What is more serious is that the mistake of the audience is often made by the quartet also, although in a lesser degree.

Quartet-players must have, above all, a vertical and not a horizontal view of the score: during the first few years each member of the quartet should play from the score, and not from separate copies, when first practising a piece. I say the *first years*, because later polyphony becomes a habit and one can more easily do without the score.

As far as possible it is best to use the same bowing. All the same, we may sometimes intentionally contradict this principle in order to make a better contrast.

The 'cello, from the nature of its register and its thick strings, is sometimes led to use different bowings from the other instruments. Tone quality must be a constant concern. . . .

In the interests of ensemble it is essential that a signal to start be given. He who has the leading part at the moment of starting is best qualified to give it.

Stands should be low enough to allow all the players to see each other easily while playing.

Here is an instance of the importance of this advice. To obtain a perfect performance of a cadential *fermata* in *forte* it is essential that everyone should conform to the speed of the first violin's bow. (If he draws his bow evenly there will be no fear of the other players' being taken by surprise.) So a clear view is essential.

One word seems to be called for on the position of the four players. After many trials and experiments, I have come to the conclusion that the system favoured by Joachim is, if not the best, at least the most practical; the two violins beside each other, the viola opposite the first violin and the 'cello beside the viola.

Two things come first:

- (1) The players must be able to hear each other perfectly;
- (2) The position taken in halls, broadcast and recording studios, must be that which has been taken in rehearsal.

Some quartets sit in a semi-circle; if this satisfies the first condition, it neglects the second, because all platforms do not permit a similar placing. Besides which, sound engineers in studios have their own requirements, dictated by the laws of acoustics. And nothing is less pleasant or less auspicious than to change positions just before a recital or recording.

It should be a fixed principle that we are able to hear each other at every moment and in any circumstances. To achieve this in over-resonant halls (where there may even be an echo) I strongly advise starting with somewhat subdued *fortes*. Little by little our ears will accustom themselves to the adverse acoustics and show us the way to balance the volume of tone.

Before passing on to my next point I would like to say a word about ornaments, *fiorituri* and trills. Let us take as our model the human voice and play them no faster than we can sing them. I often hear, in a slow movement of serene and moving calm, a trill which is much too fast. Trills in these places have the character, for me, more of a vibration of an expressive note that can even be begun slowly, than of what a virtuoso trill so often resembles—an electric bell.

Questions of interpretation

We should mistrust egocentric interpretations; and beware of enslaving the music we are interpreting to our own state of mind. The object of playing is not to expose our personality, but to bring alive the composer's ideas through the means of our personality. We, the interpreters, are nothing but the humble servants of the great masters.

Certainly, there can be no question of an interpretation which is objective in the absolute meaning of the word. We still meet all too often in concert halls that wearying classicism which is only the result of a false conception of the art of interpretation. . . .

How many times have I not heard it said that the composer's ideas will appear more clearly if the interpreter limits himself to playing the notes with the greatest possible deference to the text. But the fact is that the notes can only become living music through the interpreter's sensibility. It is there that a large and creative part of his task lies.

A great interpreter does not improvise. He must, above all, have absorbed the music in its entirety. In elaborating his plans for performance, he must have analysed, in minutest detail, the intentions with which he wishes to imbue his interpretation. He must bring his critical faculties to the service of a sober and clear conception. And indeed it is only after this labour that his conscience can be satisfied and his nerves relaxed—an essential for his favourable appearance in public.

The matter thus painstakingly prepared will, by degrees, become part of him, and, each time he presents it, will pass through the filter of an increased sensibility.

It is quite wrong to believe that an artist creates in a kind of semi-consciousness; he has, on the contrary, to be absolutely clear-minded. It is also wrong to

say that it is under the influence of emotion that works of art are conceived. 'I am moved, therefore I am deceived' is a well-known truth in psychology. We must overcome our emotions, and not they us. Otherwise, there is a danger that we shall go beyond our intentions, let our sensibility overflow, and become victims of a number of exaggerations.

These exaggerations remind me of the disagreeable sensations that I have on re-reading a book which has been lent to someone else who thought it a good idea to underline the phrases which pleased him. These underlined phrases take on quite another meaning to that which their author intended, and so they become in some measure false to him. The manner of expression must be in balanced relation to the thought.

We have the unpleasant task of having to be at our best at a particular time on a certain day. It is not always humanly possible. We cannot expect that we should always be in a state of grace, both psychologically and physically, at the very moment when we have to give a concert. We are able, however, to take care to prevent our being in a state of depression. If we cannot fully achieve this, we can nevertheless avoid overworking during at least the previous twenty-four hours.

We should not tire our minds nor our bodies by immoderate work: on no account should we do more than the customary amount of work on the preceding day. On the contrary, we should do our best to conserve our reserves of energy.

The concert will not go better, but rather the reverse, if on the last day we make alterations in our interpretation; (there are players rash enough to change fingerings and bowings on the eve of a concert).

But it is in the practice-room that the fate of the concert is largely decided. We should avoid forming bad habits while practising. A habit becomes fixed, certainly, by degrees, but it is formed the first time it is committed.

We must endeavour to arrive at the concert free of all mental preoccupations. We shall conquer fear if we are able to lean for support on our experiences whilst practising. If, in spite of everything, we do not feel in a creative frame of mind at the time of the concert, let us not force our expression. Capet used to say that when he did not feel at his best he preferred to play without feeling. He would become warmer by degrees from contact with the music.

This seems to me an extremely wise course. In forcing the expression all we do is to make grimaces, and we risk compromising the fate of the whole concert. All spontaneity and freshness will be lost, and we shall depart further from our true conception.

It is also necessary to try to keep calm at a recital, even if one thing or another does not succeed as we would wish. In a quartet recital, even though we ourselves are not at our best, our three partners may be. The concert will not be ruined because we do not feel in full possession of our powers. Our personal disposition is not a criterion by which to judge the worth of the performance as a whole.

I would also like to draw attention to a very important point which many young performers do not treat with sufficient respect: namely, rests. They often neglect them; and yet they have the same importance as notes.

Here I have some good advice: during rests we should try and keep still and not do anything to disturb our contact with this 'inaudible' music. (Think, for instance, of the Scherzo of Beethoven's eleventh quartet!) In this way, the effect will be much more expressive and suggestive.

I would not wish to end this part of my essay without saying a few words about playing from memory.

I shall not be telling musicians anything new when I say that a performance from memory adds nothing to the artistic value of the interpretation. Nevertheless, in the last few years this practice has grown and has won over even conductors and quartet-players. I do not wish to open a discussion on the advisability of playing from memory, but I am often questioned about it and that is the reason why I cannot pass over this detail, which seems so to excite music-lovers. (How often have I not heard it said that such and such an artist was superb because he played from memory!)

Some artists claim to have greater freedom in not using music. Others submit to this 'necessity', but not without regret. To my mind these last are wrong, because there are enough reasons for anxiety without adding another.

We make our young pupils learn their pieces by heart, simply because it is an excellent way of obliging them to work; for it is only after a considerable amount of work that a piece is committed to memory. But I cannot approve of all those who play from memory at great risk, with the sole object of dazzling their audiences; (recitals where a preoccupation with the 'spectacular' takes first place are, alas, only too frequent).

There is no doubt that the act of playing from memory makes the performance less secure. According to quartet-players who follow this practice, it is very rarely that they are able to give a concert without mishap. Can we expect a nervous system subjected to such torture to be sufficiently free and full to communicate the impressions of art?

Even among great soloists there are always some who refuse to play without music. Pugno and Bartók (who was also a prodigious pianist) are two outstanding examples.

Sociability

The practice of chamber music is in general an excellent means of developing our sociability. We must inevitably learn to respect the ideas of others, to understand the moods of our colleagues and to curb our own. It is a marvellous school for modesty and we learn that quality so important in life: forbearance.

For mutual understanding we must make concessions and accept them truly. We must know how to make occasional sacrifices in order to adopt the ideas of others; and what horizons will not open to us when we succeed in playing with conviction in a new harmony!

We must know how to create an atmosphere pleasant to work in together, for art only flourishes in a mild climate where mutual understanding and goodwill predominate.

How could art be created in the conditions in which some celebrated quartets have lived? Where such hatred grew up between some members of the group, that they did not speak to each other any more, and when they were obliged to travel, used to reserve places far apart in the train and to choose different hotels?

Sociability is a very serious problem for the life of a quartet.

We have seen quartets, who were destined to reach remarkable heights, rapidly disband because of grave disagreement.

One of the greatest virtuosi of our day, Bronislav Hubermann, was very fond indeed of the quartet. Each time he had a chance to play in one he was very pleased. One day someone asked him why, as he liked it so much, he had not thought of forming a permanent ensemble. He replied with a sad (and significant) expression: 'Que voulez-vous, je n'ai pas encore eu la chance de trouver trois gentlemen!'

.

Pascal said: 'La vertu d'un homme ne doit pas se mesurer par ses efforts mais par ce qu'il fait d'ordinaire.'

I will allow myself to add to this profound remark that the worth of an artist is not measured by a few successful concerts, but by the work of his whole lifetime.

The life of an artist represents hard work. He must work without ceasing, evolve and conduct his life through all possible vicissitudes in order better to be able to serve an ideal. As Verlaine has said: 'De la musique avant toute chose.'

DOMENICO SCARLATTI'S HARMONY

Ralph Kirkpatrick

Consistency of Scarlatti's harmonic style

Domenico Scarlatti has long been considered a freakish if not downright incorrect composer for the harpsichord. Almost without exception his editors and commentators have betrayed an insufficient comprehension of the fundamental consistency of his harmonic style. It is the purpose of this article to suggest that not a single passage of Scarlatti's most startling or irregular bursts of genius fails to submit to an explanation in terms of Scarlatti's own keyboard conception of harmony. The essential nature of Scarlatti's keyboard style explains itself far more intelligibly through his handling of harmony than through the superficial peculiarities of his harpsichord writing. Even under the disadvantage of submitting a notably untheoretical composer to a highly theoretical treatment, an examination of Domenico Scarlatti's harmony serves to show why, although not necessarily one of the greatest, he was one of the most original composers of the eighteenth century. Scarlatti's vocal works followed orthodox eighteenth-century principles, but his harpsichord sonatas, from no precedent, and from few sources that we are able definitely to trace, created new conceptions of harmony and of tonal form, neither of which to this day has been adequately accounted for.

I have deliberately refrained from attempting to explain Scarlatti's harmony entirely in terms of eighteenth-century theorists, even of Gasparini and Soler, those writers closest to Scarlatti respectively at the beginning and end of his career. In the first place, there is much for which they fail to account. In the second place, their terminology is so antiquated as to be almost unintelligible to the modern reader. I draw occasionally on eighteenth-century notions, especially on the refusal of many writers to accord full recognition to Rameau's theory of chord inversion. At the risk, however, of appearing pedantic to the layman and naïve to the theorist, I have concocted a patchwork system of analysis and terminology from various sources most familiar to us, largely from those very nineteenth-century harmony textbooks which fail so signally to explain the procedures of Domenico Scarlatti! At least in application it is no less clumsy than the systems from which it is drawn. The most I would wish for such a system, besides intelligibility in modern terms, is incompleteness. (Were Domenico Scarlatti's music entirely explainable in words, it would not be worth explaining.) My intention is to show in their context only the most salient features of Domenico Scarlatti's harmony, not to imprison them in a system from which they would anyhow immediately escape.

Basic triads and the three-chord analysis

The materials of Scarlatti's harmony are far simpler than, on the surface, they would seem to be. Despite his wealth of dissonance and modulation, the principal

elements that Scarlatti manipulates with such unfailing fantasy stem from the basic triads I, V, and IV, their inversions and major and minor relationships (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1 MAJOR I MAJOR Altered third Relative I MINOR Altered third Relative

The diagram shows three rows of musical notation in bass clef. The first row shows triads for the major scale: I MAJOR (C-E-G), Altered third (C-Eb-G), Relative (F-A-C), and I MINOR (C-Eb-G). The second row shows triads for the minor scale: I MAJOR (C-E-G), Altered third (C-Eb-G), Relative (F-A-C), and I MINOR (C-Eb-G). The third row shows triads for the minor scale: I MAJOR (C-E-G), Altered third (C-Eb-G), Relative (F-A-C), and I MINOR (C-Eb-G).

Allowing for suspensions and pedals, changing and passing notes, temporary modulations, and harmonic contractions and superpositions, a large number of Scarlatti sonatas can be analysed entirely in terms of these three chords. For example, Sonata 18 of Venice XV (Longo 407), despite its demoniac variety and its bone-crunching acciaccaturas, is built entirely on tonic, dominant and subdominant harmony. These three chords suffice to explain the calm and impeccable logic that underlies this wild piece.

Much less frequent in Scarlatti are the chords based on the remaining degrees of the scale. The minor triads of the major scale, VI, III, and II, can often be explained as relative minors to I, V, and IV; and the major triads of the minor scale on III, VII, and VI, as relative majors (Ex. 2). Scarlatti's usage does not seem to

Ex. 2 MAJOR Relative minor MINOR Relative major

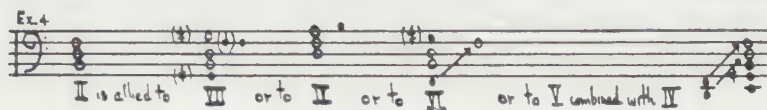
The diagram shows three rows of musical notation in treble clef. The first row shows triads for the major scale: VI (F-A-C), Relative minor (F-A-C), MINOR (F-A-C), and Relative major (F-A-C). The second row shows triads for the minor scale: III (F-A-C), Relative minor (F-A-C), MINOR (F-A-C), and Relative major (F-A-C). The third row shows triads for the minor scale: III (F-A-C), Relative minor (F-A-C), MINOR (F-A-C), and Relative major (F-A-C).

lend an independent function to VII either of the major or minor scale (Ex. 3), or

Ex. 3

The diagram shows two rows of musical notation in bass clef. The first row shows triads for the major scale: VII (F-A-C), VII (F-A-C), VII (F-A-C), and VII (F-A-C). The second row shows triads for the minor scale: VII (F-A-C), VII (F-A-C), VII (F-A-C), and VII (F-A-C).

to II of the minor scale (Ex. 4). These triads are related chiefly to the dominant.



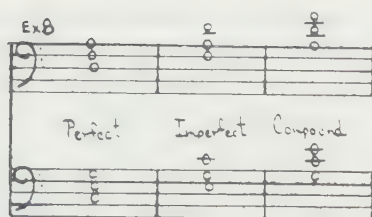
(All Scarlatti's seemingly modal progressions are invariably given a tonal usage. See, for example, the plagal close of the first half of Essercizi 1, Longo 366, or the fluctuation between a C major chord based on the flattened leading note and a D minor tonic in Venice XIII 3, Longo S. 12, or Example 7 from Venice III 18, Longo 214.



Often Scarlatti will begin a piece in minor (Parma XV 39, Longo 421; Venice XIII 6, Longo 475) or throw the central section into minor (Venice XIV 2, Longo 423; Venice XV 36, Longo 282), in order to burst out with a blaze of glory in major at the end. Sometimes he will do the reverse and throw a cloud over a piece in major by ending in minor (Venice XV 9, Longo 474).

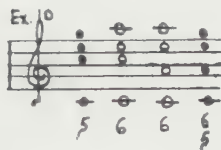
Inversion and Fundamental Bass

I have not been able to discover whether Scarlatti was in any way acquainted with the theories of chord inversion and fundamental bass that Rameau first enunciated in his *Traité de l'Harmonie* of 1722. Many composers of the eighteenth century, above all J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, refused to accept these theories, and their music often lends itself better to an analysis based on the chord classification advanced by most of the conventional eighteenth-century thoroughbass treatises. In these treatises the principle of inversion is ignored, and chords are classified as triads, chords of the sixth, six-four chords, sevenths, six-five chords, etc. As an experienced continuo player I can testify to the practicality of this classification. The continuo player thinks of chords only in their context. The principle of inversion is of little use to him except in the case of arpeggiated basses. Scarlatti, like all the other composers of the eighteenth century, was a continuo player from childhood, accustomed in a split second to reducing all music, in any style, to the vertical chord skeleton and the simple basic progressions of continuo harmony. Nevertheless, quite apart from Rameau, the principle of chord inversion was in the air, and it was tacitly recognized at least in part by all those composers who refused to admit it in theory. Scarlatti's pupil, Antonio Soler, in the theoretical treatise, *Llave de la Modulacion*, to which I shall shortly allude in greater detail, makes no specific mention of a principle of inversion, but his examples and commentary seem to take that principle for granted. He classifies the basic major and minor consonances in the following manner, showing five-three triads as perfect, sixth chords as imperfect, and six-four chords as compound (Ex. 8).



In the style that Scarlatti evolved for his keyboard music, the notion of inversion finds far more of a place than it does in his vocal music.

Let us examine Scarlatti's sixth chords. As in continuo harmony their function is fluid. Often they are related to a triad on the same bass, of which they merely act as changing notes (Ex. 9), or with which they may fuse to form the six-five chord that was the continuo player's alternate prerogative for many chords marked only as chords of the sixth (Ex. 10). At other times they are clearly related to what we would call the root position of the chord (Ex. 11).



Scarlatti does not seem to have thought of a complete set of six-four chords as such. The only one which appears to have an independent existence is I 6/4 associated with V. Other six-four chords result from arpeggiation of basses, suspensions, passing or changing notes, or from temporary modulation which lends them the momentary function of I 6/4.

Scarlatti's use of the Neapolitan sixth is not particularly conspicuous; it forms a mere detail in his rich technique of alteration. It is often subordinated to a straight minor subdominant, or to melodic alterations produced by stepwise moving parts (Essercizi 24, Longo 495; Venice XV 6, Longo 465).

Scarlatti is more concerned with fundamental tonal function than with fundamental bass. His harmony is bottomless. It no longer rests squarely on the horizontal lines of the bass, but hovers around the central degrees of tonality. Chords for Scarlatti do not represent aggregates of voices, at least not beyond the demands of a vocally intelligible horizontal conduct of his basic two-part writing; they represent points of tonality. His harmonies are not solids to be juxtaposed like mosaics; they are fluids that can be mixed and blended like a painter's colours. The flexible nature of Scarlatti's chords permits all sorts of extensions, contractions, and momentary superposition of tonal functions. The fundamental bass may appear in any voice, or it may instantaneously shift from one voice to another. Hence the looseness and apparent unorthodoxy of his conduct of parts.

The remaining elements of Scarlatti's harmony may be approached in terms of the vocabulary of eighteenth-century thoroughbass as enunciated by Gasparini, in terms of the vertical combinations of tones produced by suspensions or by the

diatonic movement of parts, or in terms of derivatives or combinations of the three basic cadential chords. Neither the rules of Gasparini's thoroughbass nor the established principles of vocal part writing, all perfectly exemplified in Scarlatti's operas and church music, are sufficient fully to explain his harpsichord music. There Scarlatti's peculiar and largely original technique of blurring together various elements from the three basic triads, as well as his practices of transposition and omission of parts, must be taken into account. But tempting as it is to show how dramatically much of Scarlatti's most elaborate harmony can be reduced to three chords and their combinations, there is no reason to suppose that he ever intentionally practised or even thought of such a limitation. The predominance of cadential formulas, despite his use of the entire vocabulary of eighteenth-century thoroughbass and of a great variety of harmonies produced by the horizontal diatonic movement of parts, is merely an inevitable result of Scarlatti's overwhelming sense of tonality.

Remaining elements of harmonic vocabulary, peculiarities of seventh chords

The behaviour of Scarlatti's seventh chords corresponds least to the concepts of orthodox harmony. In terms of thoroughbass, the whole vocabulary of seventh chords and what we would call their inversions is to be found in Scarlatti. But he never seems to have thought of a complete set of secondary sevenths and their inversions on every tone of the scale, in terms of nineteenth-century theory. As chords they represent, in the main, only the vertical continuo reduction of the intervals formed by the horizontal movement of parts, or the combination of elements from the three basic triads. Even Scarlatti's commonest seventh chords,

Ex. 12a Venice IX 22 (Longo 150)

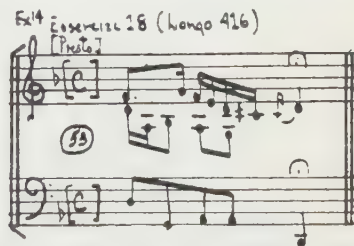
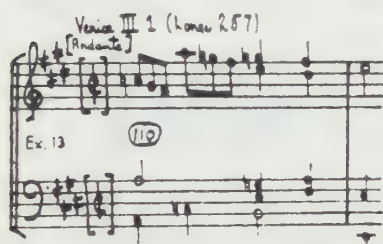
The musical score for Ex. 12a, Venice IX 22 (Longo 150), is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The bass staff in each system contains a series of numbered circles, likely representing harmonic intervals or chords. The treble staff shows the corresponding melodic lines. The first system has seven measures, the second has seven measures, and the third has five measures. The numbers in the circles are: 71-74, 75-78, 79-82, 83-86, 87-90, 91-94, 95-98, 99-101, 102, 103-106, 107-110, 111-114, 115-118, 119-122, 123-126, 127-129, 130, 131-134, 135-138, 139-142, 143.

the dominant seventh and the diminished seventh, are seldom given the function ascribed to them by Bach and Mozart, by nineteenth-century harmony treatises, or even by Scarlatti himself in his vocal works.

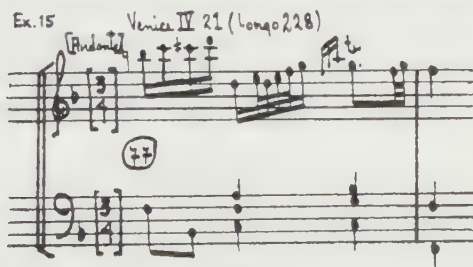
In general, Scarlatti avoids placing weight on his seventh chords or their inversions. He never sinks into them, so to speak, in the German manner. Nor does he use dominant sevenths for sweetening, as do the saccharine progressions of much contemporary Italian music. Scarlatti seems to stay on the surface of his seventh chords, as if to avoid losing the volatility of his frequently shifting tonal currents, as if to avoid encumbering with tumidity the leanness and muscularity of his lines and figurations (Ex. 12). Nearly all of Scarlatti's harmony moves lightly, even the most complicated chromatic dissonance, without becoming involved in itself.

For the most part, Scarlatti's seventh chords are composites of the simple intervals formed against the bass and among themselves by the movements of the upper parts. Scarlatti's pupil, Soler, in discussing the individual chords of his examples of modulation, never speaks of seventh chords, but only of the composite intervals between voices in relation to the bass.

It is Scarlatti's dominant seventh that is most conspicuously unorthodox. Frequently the whole chord resolves to a bare unison that would be difficult to explain in terms of vocal part writing (Ex. 13). Again and again the seventh is left hanging, without apparent resolution (Ex. 14). Scarlatti seldom uses a dominant



seventh to reinforce a final cadence. A full four-voice statement and resolution of a cadential dominant seventh as in Venice IV 11 (Longo 260) is rare. When the seventh is present in a cadential dominant, Scarlatti frequently thins the chord by



omitting the third (Ex. 15). (Longo's suggested dominant seventh at the end of Venice VI 13 (Longo 359) is quite out of keeping with Scarlatti's usual practice and with the declamation of the piece.)

Often Scarlatti will deliberately avoid a dominant seventh where it might be expected, for example, in a final cadence when it has been used in previous cadences (Venice III 1, Longo 257). In Venice XIII 7 (Longo 86) a conspicuous dominant seventh is used in the final section, but anyone acquainted with Scarlatti can quite safely predict that it will not be used in the cadence (Ex. 16).



To understand Scarlatti's unorthodox treatment of dominant sevenths and other seventh chords, we must recognize both his practice of freely transposing chord elements from one voice or from one octave to another, and his practice of superposing elements from one harmony on another. The apparently unresolved dominant seventh in Scarlatti is nothing else than a compression of IV and V with the bass of the subdominant put into an inner part and performing a perfectly natural resolution of a fourth downwards (Ex. 17). We shall shortly see how



Generally in such combinations of subdominant and dominant elements, the sounding bass represents the predominant harmonic function. In all cases of harmonic superposition one of the harmonic components must prevail over the others.

such superpositions are explained by suspensions, pedals and contractions of essential harmonic steps. Moreover we shall see that those parts representing the genuine melodic function of the two-voice skeleton generally prepare and resolve themselves in orthodox fashion, whereas the supplementary inner parts, especially those resulting from held-over pedals and superposition, are not necessarily subject to the same laws. For this reason it is notable that Scarlatti's unresolved sevenths always appear in inner parts. An unresolved seventh in the top part, or rather one taken upwards, is always resolved for the ear in another voice or given a delayed resolution (Ex. 18).

The sideways diatonic resolution of dominant and diminished sevenths, the infrequency of their resolution to a simple triad, can generally be explained by the horizontal movements of parts, and by the fact that these chords represent a combination of triads, a meeting or crossing point of tonal functions, generally produced by suspensions or pedals that oblige one harmony to overlap another (see Exs. 40, 42,¹ 46, 53). Occasionally the pedal is understood but not heard, or the

¹ This and later examples will appear in the next issue.

preparation omitted. Then the seemingly arbitrary dissonances are produced that are really nothing but contracted progressions of orthodox harmony. But we are in advance of our material.

The six-five chord in Scarlatti, as in the thoroughbass treatises, seldom bears a contextual relation to its theoretical root, the seventh chord, except in the case of arpeggiated basses. It generally represents a reinforcement of a sixth chord by the addition of a fifth. This is especially true in the case of V 6/5 (Ex. 19). II 6/5 is a further reinforcement of the subdominant function of II 6 (Ex. 20). For an

Ex. 19 Venice XIII 4 (Longo 266)
[Prestissimo]

Ex. 19 Ex. 20

unresolved fifth in a V 6/5 chord, representing a superposition from the subdominant, but doubled by an upper part that resolves it correctly, see Venice III 1 (Longo 257), bars 14-15 (Ex. 21).

Four-three chords, like six-five chords, in thoroughbass terms often represent a reinforcement of a chord of the sixth, but by the addition of the fourth (Ex. 22). In

Ex. 21 Venice III 1 (Longo 257)
[Andante]

Ex. 22

arpeggiated basses they bear a strong relationship to their so-called root position. They are generally formed by the diatonic movement of parts, sometimes by the changing note activity of the third and the fourth, so that they may derive either from a chord of the sixth or from a six-four chord. Four-three chords in Scarlatti are generally prepared and resolved diatonically, but V 4/3, like V 7, frequently functions as a combination of dominant and subdominant (Ex. 23). (For an

Ex. 23 Venice X 3 (Longo 52)
[Allegro]

unresolved II 4/3 chord, actually a superposition of IV and V, see Venice III 1, Longo 257) (Ex. 24).

Ex. 24 Venice III-1 (Longo 257)

(Parma Ms gives the form of the two grace notes as ♯ and ♮, respectively.)

Four-two chords likewise are always prepared and resolved diatonically and V 4/2 mixes dominant with subdominant. It is notable, however, that Scarlatti never resolves the bass a fourth downwards, as does J. S. Bach in certain recitatives (Ex. 25). Bach's occasional use of this formula and of the following harmonic

Ex. 25 J. S. Bach: St. Matthew Passion, B.G. II, p. 223

Die a-ber vorü-ber gin-gen, lä-ster-ten ihn und schüt-tel-ten ih-re Köp-fe, und sprachen

compression constitutes direct admission of the subdominant function of what we would call an inversion of a dominant seventh chord (Exs. 26 and 27).

Ex. 26 J. S. Bach: St. John Passion, B.G. III', p. 29 Ex. 27 J. S. Bach: St. Matthew Passion, B.G. IV, p. 223

Er sprach: Ich bins nicht

Und sie zuseh-nen ih-nen, und rü-ten sein

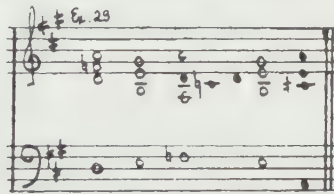
Frequently in a passage in which a four-two has been prepared, Scarlatti avoids placing weight on it by eliminating the second. This is particularly the case with V 4/2, which then becomes VII 6/4 (Ex. 28).

Ex. 28 Venice VII-7 (Longo 206)

Cadential vs. diatonic movement of harmony

All of Scarlatti's harmony is either cadential or formed by the diatonic motion of parts. The cadences may be final or merely tentative, they may outline large sections of a piece, or they may be reiterated in a series of small sequential passages. Many a Scarlatti sonata exhibits a distinct contrast between the sections dominated by cadences and those dominated by diatonic movement of parts. In every Scarlatti sonata the final tonality-establishing portion of each half is dominated by cadences, but the distinction between cadential and non-cadential sections is often masked by subsidiary harmonic decoration and diatonic figurations in the cadential sections and by the insertion of subsidiary cadences in the primarily non-cadential portions of the piece. (See Venice II 19, Longo 250.) The distinction is particularly clear in Venice XI 3 (Longo 491) between the final section of the second half (bars 59-77), which is based on nothing else but A, D, E, and A, and the stepwise sliding movement of basses in the earlier section (bars 36-58), moving from E through F sharp, G sharp, F sharp, E, D sharp, D natural, C natural, B, to A. Moreover, the only departure from three-chord harmony in the entire first half of the sonata occurs from bar thirteen to bar fifteen. As usual it is explainable by stepwise movement of parts and by the holding over of internal pedals which produce momentary superpositions of elements from two or all three of the basic chords.

The Phrygian cadence over a diatonically moving bass (minor subdominant, major dominant, often decorated by the relative major of the minor subdominant, leading to a major tonic whether real or unstated) (Ex. 29) continually turns up in



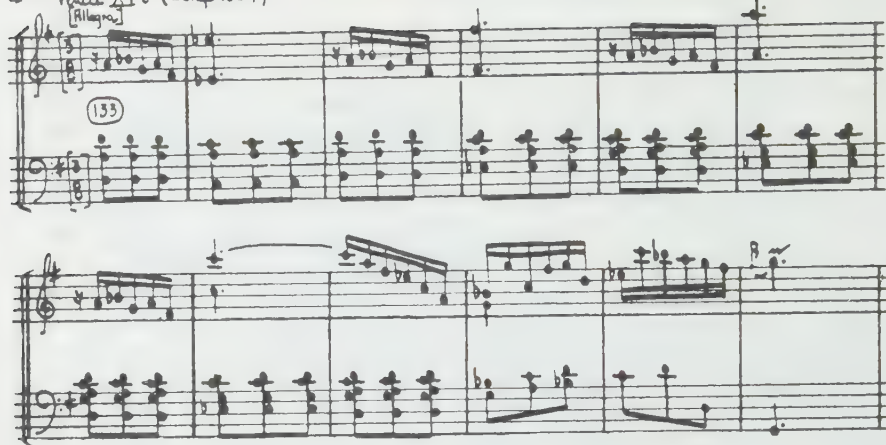
the Spanish sonatas of Scarlatti, just as it is to be heard to-day in all Spanish popular music. Scarlatti is particularly fond of it in the modulatory excursion of the second half, and the hovering passages that occur just before the definitive establishment of the closing dominant of a half. Generally it is blurred by the carrying over of pedal points and by the simultaneous sounding of several elements from its component harmonies to form acciaccaturas (Ex. 30).¹ This blurring occurs

¹ Bar 134 of the Parma Manuscript (*vide infra*, p. 44) reads:



It is to be noted also that the parallel passage in Venice XV 8 (bars 144 on) is in accord with the Parma reading, which is the same in both places as given above. In addition, the Venice MS. bears a correction of bar 134 as follows:

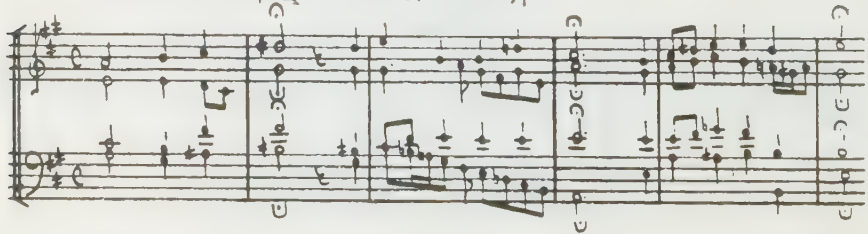


Ex. 30 *Venezia VIII* (Longo 204)

particularly when Scarlatti does not want the cadence too strong, when he wishes to continue the phrase or to eliminate any suggestion of finality (see Ex. 45), or to leave ambiguous the outcome of tonality. Such passages often form a sharp contrast with the clear cadences of the tonal section.

Vertical harmonic intensities

The network of vertical harmonic intensities is much looser in Scarlatti than in many other composers of the eighteenth century. This is partly because the horizontal bindings of the individual voices are much less closely knit than, for example, in Bach. Scarlatti's suspensions are generally lacking in tension. Bach uses them as interweaving in the harmonic fabric, Scarlatti as surface colour or as momentary plaintive inflexions. Scarlatti often deliberately destroys the tension that might be created by suspensions, dissonances, or leading notes, by not resolving them (see Exs. 39, 47). They are simply thrown off into the air like sparks; the heat is not transmitted from one part of the phrase to the other, as in Bach. It seems as if any continued form of visceral tension such as is implied by the dissonances of Germanic harmony was abhorrent to Scarlatti and as if he took every opportunity to avoid it. There is not the continual visceral fluctuation of intensity from consonances through middle dissonance to extreme dissonance that lends a specific harmonic shape to any chorale or recitative of Bach (Ex. 31), or for that matter to any movement of Mozart.

Ex. 31 J.S. Bach: Chorale *Es ist genug* (Cantata 60), B.G. XII², p. 130

Scarlatti's scale of tensions resides in the pull exerted by tonalities more or less remote from the tonal centre, and in the clashes and momentary vertical intensifications created by passing notes and non-harmony notes against the simple harmonic pattern. Scarlatti avoids the visceral pull by destroying the horizontal interweaving except for the simplest and most obvious connecting forces, i.e., dominants, relative majors and minors, and stepwise melodic motion. These he decorates and arranges in such a manner as to give the illusion of a much richer harmonic vocabulary than the one he actually uses.

Broad, open, and, to a certain extent, flat harmonies have long been a characteristic of Italian music, more especially of that in the theatrical style where passionate declamation soars above harmonies that in themselves contribute little to heighten the expressiveness, that seem at times even to have very little to do with the free flowing melodies above. Italians think much more in terms of upper parts than of basses. Yet how often the commonplace basses of Bellini and early Verdi become infused with tragic grace by the miracles performed above them.

Scarlatti's wildest freedoms are rendered intelligible by the simplicity of his basic harmonies (see Ex. 32, 'corrected' by Longo, for four consecutive sevenths,

Ex. 32 Venice III 17 (Longo 309)

[Vivo]

As given by Longo in 2000 of text (Original given in concluding foot-note)

one after another, when they are but surface decoration of a simple cadential formula) and by the clarity of their attachment to a tonal centre, whether that centre be fixed or momentarily shifting. On the other hand, the apparent loose-jointedness of many Scarlatti slow movements to an ear accustomed to greater intensity of individual harmonies explains itself in the orientation of simple harmonies around the tonal centre. Harmonic progressions which knit well and sound simple and clear in fast passages sometimes seem to lose their momentum at a slow tempo, unless heard in terms of the long span of tonal structure.

Essential peculiarities of Scarlatti's treatment: Dropping and adding of voices, transposition of voices, harmonic ellipse, pedal points both real and understood

For an understanding of the consistency of Scarlatti's harmonic style in his harpsichord music it is necessary to take into consideration several typical Scarlattian procedures not easy to explain, as his own vocal music is, in terms of the conventional theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Scarlatti's impressionistic handling of the harpsichord includes most of those liberties in the horizontal connexion of vertical harmony that are found in guitar writing. This is particularly apparent in his habit of dropping or adding voices without preparation, either for purposes of harpsichord sound or inflexion, or of harmonic colour, or of deliberate ambiguity where needed. Continually certain elements or filling-up intervals of a chord are omitted in order to give it lightness or fluidity. They are left to be understood, or taken for granted—for example, the third or even the fifth of a final tonic chord after a cadence. So they should remain, since their actual presence is highly undesirable (as many of Longo's fillings up of chords will demonstrate). The horizontal network of harmony is seldom sustained by more than the two outer parts, to which the others act as mere supplements or filling. As Soler says in his *Llave de la Modulacion*, Chapter X, on modulation (p. 84), ' . . . [All the principal movements of parts should be concentrated in the outer voices since] . . . the ear hears these two parts better, rather than those in the middle, and in all modulation it will be observed that the voices in the middle, those being the Alto and Tenor, only accompany, in accordance with the consonance that is to be produced '.

Most of Scarlatti's 'forbidden' consecutives, when not explaining themselves in terms of instrumental doubling and reinforcement as do most of his parallel octaves, and many of his apparently unconnected non-vocal progressions of parts, can be explained in terms of his inveterate habit at the keyboard of transposing and interchanging parts. The basic harmonic progression is perfectly correct in terms of the two guiding outer parts; the eye only, not the ear, is troubled by the lack of correspondence between the conduct of the actual written parts and the conventional conduct of the harmonies whose interchangeable inner voices they represent. When, in a dominant seventh, Scarlatti transposes into an upper part the borrowed subdominant bass, *nota bene*, he never puts it into the top part but allows it to merge into the texture of the inner parts.

Frequently a progression which is actually based on a simple enchainment of harmonies fulfilling all the orthodox requirements for common tones or suspensions is realized by Scarlatti at the harpsichord in terms of consecutive fifths and apparently entirely non-vocal movement of parts, as in Example 33. Yet regarded in terms of interchange and transposition of parts, such a passage is seen to outline a progression of the utmost simplicity and orthodoxy, and to be rich in common tones (Ex. 34).

Ex. 33 Venice IX 7 (Longo 215)
[Allegro]

Ex. 34

Quite frequent, especially in the early sonatas, is the downward sequence of sixth chords, realized in broken consecutive fifths between the upper parts (Ex. 35). This is, of course, merely the conventional three-voice progression with the voices interchanged in a manner that sounds altogether proper on the harpsichord (Ex. 36).

Ex. 35 Essercizi 18 (Longo 416)
[Presto]

Ex. 36

An excellent example of Scarlatti's transposition of voices and of octave is a small detail to be found in bars 28-33 of Venice XI 11 (Longo 151) and its parallel passage (Ex. 37). This is not immediately explainable in its own terms and might easily move an editor to a 'correction', as it did Longo, were he not forewarned by other examples of Scarlatti's practice. What is actually happening is that the F sharp eliminated by Longo from bar 29 is, in fact, a suspension that has been prepared in the preceding bar, but in the octave above, and in terms of vocal harmony in another voice. The real progression of the upper voice in bars 28-31 is G, F sharp, E, D. Longo's 'correction', moreover, flattens out the harmonic shape



of the phrase by eliminating the vertical intensity from bar 29 and giving it approximately the same value as bar 30.

Frequently Scarlatti will leave not only the individual intervals of a chord to be understood or taken for granted by the hearer; he will also omit an entire chord or leave it to be taken for granted in the general sense of the progression. Associated with this is his practice of contracting essential steps of a progression so that they are not immediately recognizable (see Ex. 46).

One of Scarlatti's favourite devices for binding together unexpected progressions of harmony and for preparing the overlapping and superposition of harmonies is the pedal point. Except in his fugues, Scarlatti's pedal points occur but briefly on basses. For that matter Scarlatti's real basses, as focal points of tonality, are to be found as often in the middle or on top, as on the bottom of his musical fabric. (See *Essercizi* 14, Longo 387, bars 12-17, etc., for a dominant pedal held high in the air while the lower part rises to meet it; or *Essercizi* 12, Longo 489, for a series of clanging pedal points rising in thirds in the upper part, in bars 14-18, etc.) Generally, however, Scarlatti's pedal points are embedded in the inner parts and maintained by the reiterations of figuration or allowed momentarily to disappear or to yield temporarily to decorative shifts of harmonic detail. Often in inner voices, occasional pedal points, as if played by horns or by the open strings of a guitar, gleam like polished highlights on rough bronze. (See *Essercizi* 8, Longo 488.)

Many of Scarlatti's pedal points appear to take their inspiration from the open strings of the guitar, as in *Essercizi* 26 (Longo 368) which appears to be conceived almost entirely in terms of that instrument. Out of the one hundred and forty-eight bars of this sonata, seventy-seven embrace unmistakable pedal points. The first half is dominated by two principal pedals, one on the dominant of the dominant (bars 30-42) and one on the dominant that, although occasionally broken, actually rules the remainder of the first half (bars 43-68). This is a more obvious example than usual of the gigantic cadence that rules the essential structure of the Scarlatti sonata. In an internal pedal 'corrected' by Longo in Venice VI 26 (Longo 258) Scarlatti contrives to have the note B sounding throughout this passage in both halves of the sonata, both in the tonic as well as in the dominant. This is an excellent example of the fundamental simplicity of Scarlatti's tonal thinking. In this piece he has early established the dominant, but he needs the dominant of the dominant, so without allotting it a separate section as he usually does, he simply

keeps the note sounding while other things are going on, jamming the harmony together. In the restatement he uses this same dominant of the dominant to add force to the dominant which has already been weakened by an early reappearance of the tonic (Ex. 38).

Es 30 Venice II 26 (longo 258)
(Allegro)

29

longo's alterations

Noted

29-32

30-31

Not noted

33-34

72

72-73

74-75

longo has now
* misquoted the
original as is.
Corrects as is.

Again, original
* misquoted as
above and then
corrected.

Harmonic superposition

But Scarlatti's most striking device, in large part original in his time, and the source of most of the 'modernisms' that one regards even to-day with surprise, is the superposition of one harmony on another. This device had long been practised, in a limited sense, by most composers. We find it in the clash of elements from dominant and tonic in the so-called Corelli cadence, in anticipations, passing notes, and more or less conventional suspensions or pedal points, in the piling up in varying instrumental timbres of surface decoration that does not always agree with the fundamental bass, as in some of the Brandenburg concertos of Bach. We find it in the ambiguities of certain recitative progressions (see Exs. 26 and 27) or as in some of the keyboard preludes and the Chromatic Fantasy of Bach in the ambiguous middle ground between one clearly defined harmony and another. But

never before had it been used with the freedom and fluidity of Scarlatti. Anticipating to a certain extent some of the characteristic practices of a Stravinsky, Scarlatti boldly combines his basic harmonies at times, instead of allowing one basic chord temporarily to be coloured by borrowings from another.

Scarlatti's harmonic superpositions prepare themselves in several ways. The most conventional of them stem from the ordinary devices of suspension, the tying over of elements of one chord into another.

Sometimes superposed harmonies are prepared for and rendered intelligible by perfectly conventional pedal points. At other times the pedal points are interrupted or merely suggested. In the more complicated cases there are often two or more pedal points sounding simultaneously (see Ex. 41).

In many cases, conventional harmonic progressions, especially cadences, are contracted until their separate elements all sound at once without apparent preparation, and the individual inner voices transpose themselves and interchange their functions (see Exs. 42 and 46).

Often the preparatory step that would immediately explain the enchainment of an unusual harmonic combination, but remove from it all surprise, has been deliberately omitted (see Ex. 46).

A passage like Example 39 contains harmonic sforzatos over pedal points that appear to be ninth chords, but anyone acquainted with Scarlatti's more obvious

Ex 39

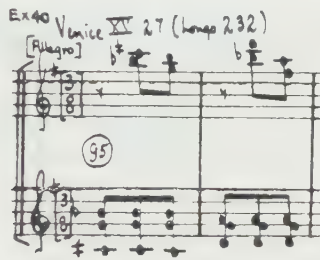
Veneta VIII 2 (Largo 4/8)

[Ritardissimo]

examples of superposition in similar passages knows that they are superposed elements of subdominant and dominant, and that Scarlatti's omission of the

resolution of the apparent ninth at bar 30 and in parallel passages (bars 107, 113, 115) is perfectly intentional because he does not want any weight on the subsequent six-four chord. Likewise Scarlatti lets fall the diminished fifth of a six-five chord in bars 39-40 without resolving it at all, because it is not a genuine dissonance prepared by a suspension as it appears to be, but an overlapping strand of a previous harmony in a purely harmonic sense, a superposition that is not subject to the same laws as a genuine melodic realization of a harmonic progression. It is significant that Scarlatti never puts such unresolved dissonances into a genuine upper voice. The underlying two-voice texture, not necessarily that which first appears to the eye, but that which may underlie Scarlatti's vagaries of figuration or transposition of voice or octave, always obeys the orthodox rules of vocal harmony. Longo's alteration of the D on the second quaver to A in bar 40 introduces a four-two chord of a weight that is quite un-Scarlattian in such a context. The inner voices merely represent intermittent pedals on tonic, subdominant, and dominant.

An extreme example of superposition is to be found in Ex. 40. This occurs in the course of a modulation from the key of F minor to D major, when Scarlatti



has reached a diminished seventh chord on C sharp that is none other than a combination of elements of dominant and subdominant in D minor. With wild disregard of convention and of his future editor's feelings Scarlatti resolves the left hand to D, holding the pedal on G, and, moving his uppermost part in octaves with the bass, plasters elements from a G minor chord on those of a D major chord, with hair-raising results. At the turning point into D at bar 95, the pedal point on F that has been sounding since bar 83 is allowed to lapse. It appears to move to G, but in another context it might perfectly well have been dropped like a sound that dies out. Incidentally, nothing could be more foreign to Scarlatti's harmonic phrasing and instrumental declamation than Longo's filling up of the D major chord at bar 102. Scarlatti wrote exactly the texture that he wanted.

In one or several of the above senses all of Scarlatti's so-called acciaccaturas are explainable. They are not tone-clusters in the sense that they are arbitrary blobs of dissonance, nor are they necessarily haphazard fillings up of diatonic intervals or simultaneous soundings of neighbouring tones; they are logical expressions of Scarlatti's harmonic language and organic manifestations of his tonal structure.

The acciaccaturas in Venice XV 22 (Longo 415) have been repeatedly cited as examples of extreme dissonance or as examples of interpolated grace notes, fillings up of intervals or neighbouring tones in the manner of Gasparini or Geminiani

(Ex. 41). The dissonance is extreme enough; in bar 163 (at least in the 'uncorrected'

Ex. 41 Venice XV 22 (Largo 9/16)

The image displays four systems of musical notation for a piece titled 'Ex. 41 Venice XV 22 (Largo 9/16)'. Each system consists of two staves, likely representing a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system is marked with a circled '143' and includes a bracketed instruction '[Allargando]' above the first staff. The second system is marked with a circled '151'. The third system is marked with a circled '159'. The fourth system is marked with a circled '167'. The notation is dense, particularly in the lower staves, with many beamed notes and complex chordal structures that create a highly dissonant texture, especially in the pedal points mentioned in the text.

version) all seven notes of the minor scale are sounding simultaneously. But actually these dissonances are not dissonances demanding the melodic treatment and resolutions of vocal harmony; they are nothing but strands of tonic, dominant and subdominant harmony that are allowed to stray into pedal points, to coincide and clash. Note the following pedal points: on D (bars 18-35), on A (bars 36-44), on E (bars 45-46), on A (bars 51-64, 96-106), on E (bars 106-115), on D (bars 151-162, 163-186). Overlapping for a time with this last pedal point on D is one on A (bars 161-170, 172-175), and one on E (bars 162-168). In other words, all the elements of a cadence on A (except for a G sharp really to confirm the dominant) have been combined not only in separate chords but also in simultaneous pedal points, blurred together in a quivering mass of dissonance that is further jarred into vibration by the presence of the elements of a cadence on D, which is produced by the addition of a G minor subdominant to the A and D. Further involvement of purely dominant harmony within a limited tonal scheme is scarcely possible. This tangle of superposed harmony thins out at the end of the piece into a series of clear and unconcentrated cadences.

(To be continued in the next issue)

THE PROBLEM OF CLEAR PRESENTATION

Daniel Jones

My rather ambiguous title has nothing to do with musical interpretation ; the problem is that which often occupies the honest composer : how to present his music in such a way that his intentions are made clear to the listener.

At once I have to deal with a formidable objection. It might be argued that music and its presentation are indivisible, that in a piece of music they are in fact the same thing, and therefore that even the expression 'presentation of music' embodies a fallacy. This is the half-truth beloved of the romantic enthusiast who speaks of some much idolized work as if it had been found washed up on a beach, or had dropped from above into the composer's lap like a ripe plum. The true part of the half-truth seems to be this : in a well-nigh perfect piece of music its various elements are so closely related that at the time of performance they appear entirely interdependent : here the problems of composition have been satisfactorily solved, but this does not mean that the problems have never existed. Looking at the finished work the critic is impressed by its unity, and even if, with the finished work as his starting point, he indulges in a little analytical exploration the result is merely to confirm again and again his axiom of inevitability ; his game has the same logical value as a combination of Euclidean propositions designed to prove the definition of a point and, far from adding objectively to the connotations of the enigma, his investigations are in reality personal and arbitrary. If the critic recognizes this he is at the same time driven to conclude that, the musical elements being inseparable, any one of them cannot provide a separate problem.

This, however, is the analytical point of view, with the completed work as the starting-point. The way in which a piece of music has come into existence can be known only by synthesis, by working towards the completed work from nothing ; in fact, in order to know this part of its secret you have to compose it. From this new point of view, what happens to the 'indivisibility' of the completed work ? The indivisibility has to be assembled from the multiple and the heterogeneous. As for 'inevitability', this may emerge with luck from a combination of vacillation and patient contriving. In short, there are plenty of changes of mind, after-thoughts, revisions, and as many separate problems as there are notes. However vulgar it may seem to the critic, then, we must insist that presentation, or treatment, can in synthesis be detached from other elements and that, for practical purposes, its problems can be discussed to the exclusion of other problems of composition.

(1)

The word 'clarity,' when applied to prose that has a functional rather than an artistic aim, refers, of course, merely to its intelligibility, the result of orthological precision and logical validity. As an attribute of a work of art the word has a different meaning.

In a painting 'clarity' refers to the composition ; where the principal motif of the composition distinctly dominates the whole to the exclusion of minor details of design, or where there are only a few motifs and those strongly related and well harmonized, the painting possesses clarity. For example, the paintings of Frith lack clarity, while those of Breughel senior, despite their apparent complexity, possess the quality of abundance.

In a poem clarity is not just the absence of obscurity, it is a very positive quality. At the heart of a poem lies the reason for its existence, usually, but not always, an emotional tension which is resolved by the poem itself ; around this we may imagine grouped the numerous elements of expression, from the imagery, the patterns of rhythm and timbre, down to humble meaning and logic. When there is a harmony between these elements and what I have called the heart of the poem, when there is an economy in their use and an absence of the extraneous, the poem has clarity. Many poems possessing this quality seem, as it were, to have been through several fires that have left them naked, but not bare. This sort of poetry is to be found among the Psalms, and in Sophocles and Dante ; the opposite quality is well displayed in Keats's *Endymion*.

So far, then, there is at least an analogy between the clarity of painting and the clarity of poetry. In both, clarity is the result of these conditions : (1) distinct prominence is given to one motif or a very small number of closely related motifs ; (2) the accompanying elements, themselves well related, are economically treated and kept in a subordinate position ; (3) extraneous matter is excluded. These conditions together constitute a definition of clarity and it is in this sense that I wish to apply the word to music.

(2)

According to this definition, is not 'formal clarity' synonymous with 'clear presentation' ? Only when the meaning of the word 'form' is extended beyond its usual acceptance, that is, when it is allowed to include the whole scope of musical organization, from the largest unit, the completed work, to the smallest, two successive notes.

To take the largest unit first, there are these questions to be considered : (1) the number of principal parts ; (2) their differentiation in structure, *tempo*, 'mood', and so on.

On the first question I must frankly admit that the usual academic recommendations seem sound enough. The conventional, well-contrasted four movements of

sonata form give the best promise of clarity in a serious work ; this number also offers other advantages, outside the scope of the present discussion, that make it preferable to two and considerably preferable to three. When two or more of the four movements are linked, the skilful composer shows his appreciation of the danger to clarity by laying greater emphasis on contrast. In light or descriptive music, *divertimenti* or ballet suites, for example, several movements do not make for obscurity, because each movement is necessarily short, simple in structure, and strongly characterized. The Beethoven late Quartets do not disprove the argument ; to those who assert that the unusual number of movements in some of these works are not just something one accepts for the sake of the music but are actually an advantage, it can be replied that a lesser composer could not have turned to advantage such a handicap. Haydn's *The Seven Words on the Cross*, as the occasion for which it was written indicates, was hardly intended as a work in seven movements, any more than Chopin's *Opus 25* can be regarded as a work in twelve movements ; however, since Haydn composed the seven parts for successive performance, they remain a most remarkable instance of the sufficiency of subtle contrast in the hands of a great craftsman.

One cannot argue from exceptions ; the academic recommendation to introduce as much contrast between the movements as is compatible with the unity of the whole, remains good advice to the composer who knows he is no Haydn. Even the lucid music of Bizet's *Symphony* or Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* gains added lustre from the well-marked contrast between the movements ; how much more, then, is such contrast effective and necessary in music that is in itself less clear. Some composers, however, can never provide quite enough contrast even if they want to. Sometimes the expressive power, though not small in intensity, is limited in range. Perhaps Debussy's *La Mer*, despite its descriptive pretensions, may be taken as an example ; even a good musician might be excused for asking during a performance, 'Which movement is this ?' Other composers, lacking perhaps Debussy's special compensations, fail so badly in this direction that the music seems to be arbitrarily cut up into chunks ; such at least is the listener's disagreeable impression. Sometimes the lack of sufficient contrast between the movements is due to poverty of invention. Not long ago I heard a new symphony which received much commendation before the first performance because the composer had the 'happy' idea of using the same thematic material in all the movements in order to achieve unity *par excellence* ; however, the unusually short spaces between the movements which the conductor unkindly provided and a protracted caesura in the middle of the first movement combined to frustrate the analytical endeavours of at least one listener. To the malicious it might seem that the composer's happy idea really was to avow a weakness in the guise of a praiseworthy intention and so forestall criticism.

In this and other unfortunate instances one is tempted to say that the works should not have been written in separate movements at all ; for there is surely a mutual relationship between the need for contrast in thematic material, *tempo* and so on, on the one hand, and the need for a new movement on the other : the two needs might be expected to arise simultaneously, and to be simultaneously satisfied.

(3)

Contrast is, of course, required, though to a smaller degree, to give definition to the smaller structural divisions within the movement. There is no need to repeat here the usual academic recommendations, most of which are suggested by common sense ; however, the subject of this essay demands at least some mention of one device, Silence.

In the form of rests giving essential ventilation to the musical texture, silence makes a large contribution to clarity not only in the exposition of musical material but also acoustically. In the present context its importance is as a method, the most thoroughgoing one, of marking off structural divisions ; a function similar to that of the thick monochrome line with which some painters surround their principal forms.

The quality of a composer's work is perhaps best shown in the quality of his silence. Silence that has the sterility of a vacuum is not only bad in itself, it proves that the composer has failed in what preceded it. Even a poor composer can follow the rule 'never begin a silence with an air of finality', but it takes a good composer to produce a silence imbued with a positive quality of power.

There are many lesser forms of silence, or at least a similar effect is produced by many forms of musical inactivity, for example : tonal inactivity, a single sustained note or a repeated fixed pattern of notes ; harmonic inactivity, a single sustained chord, a repeated fixed pattern of chords or an 'expectant' accompaniment of the 'vamp till ready' type ; rhythmic inactivity, the cessation of rhythmic interest or an unvarying rhythmic monotony ; contrapuntal inactivity, the occurrence of homophony in a work of strictly contrapuntal form ; and even instrumental inactivity, the impressive inactivity of the strings, for instance, when the wind is playing alone, or the menacing expectation of trombones.

Silence in fact not only surrounds but also permeates music, and, in doing so, usually increases the clarity of it. There are, however, instances of the reverse effect. Mention has already been made of a misleading caesura in the first movement of a symphony ; here is a similar illustration. A contemporary Piano Trio was described in the programme of a concert as having three movements, fast, slow, fast. After a rather long, rambling *Allegro* section the music reached a point of rest ; there followed a silence, an equally long slow section *Lento*, again reaching a point of rest and again followed by a silence. And then ? To everyone's astonishment, a recapitulation of the first section ; we were still in the first movement. The conclusion is obvious : while the definition of structure by contrast, silences and other devices is merely desirable, continuity is essential.

(4)

The second movement of the same Piano Trio was, I remember, no longer than the middle section of the first movement, and the last movement was shorter

than either. Such disproportion would seem easy enough to avoid, yet it is found surprisingly often in serious contemporary works even by good composers ; a string quartet, for example, in which the three movements are respectively five, twelve and four minutes long, would not be a rarity. Surely the composer can add to the formal clarity of his work by setting approximate time limits to the parts of his design, down at least to the main divisions within a movement ? I am not suggesting that a formula should be drawn up and forced upon all composers and all compositions indiscriminately ; what I have in mind is a personal decision made by one composer about one work at a time. For example, a symphony approximately 35 minutes long may be projected ; if the composer decides upon and roughly keeps to prearranged times for his movements, say 12, 9, 5 and 9 minutes, and even for the smaller divisions, $4\frac{1}{2}$ minutes for the first movement exposition and so on, the resultant gain in clarity of design in the whole work would, I think, amply console the composer for any accusations of pedantry that might be levelled against him.

Everyone knows that size and proportion mean different things, yet how often is it taken for granted that a long work must be diffuse and a short work concise. If a work is well proportioned, from the formal point of view it cannot be too long, while if it is badly proportioned, from every point of view it cannot be too short. A musical idea surely has its own natural length ; if it fails to reach this length it is cramped, and if it proceeds beyond it, it is distended. Perhaps the most satisfying moments for a listener occur when a composer of equable temperament and lyrical endowments allows his musical idea to unfold without interruption or undue emphasis until it exactly attains the dimensions naturally appropriate to it ; the famous D minor flute solo in Gluck's *Orfeo* derives its Elysian perfection in large measure from this special kind of formal appositeness. The work of some composers is marred by obscurity because the fear of diffuseness drives them to deny their ideas the room they naturally require ; these natural dimensions, however, do not produce diffuseness, they mark the point where the greatest clarity can be combined with the greatest concision.

(5)

Among the smaller structural divisions it is in exposition that there is the greatest need of clarity ; the listener obviously is best equipped to disentangle intricate development and much modified recapitulation when he has a firm comprehension and memory of the thematic material. The clarity of a Mozart exposition, for example, is acknowledged, but the contemporary composer cannot take the classical procedure as a model without bringing an element of *pastiche* into his work ; original material requires original presentation and each composer must find the solution to his own problem. If we except obvious devices like the use of unison, it is, then, less controvertible to suggest what may cause obscurity in exposition than to try to follow the opposite course.

A vague, elusive style, however pleasing to the effeminate taste of certain exquisites, is more likely to produce obscurity than a plain and positive style, and a

large number of subtle musical insinuations are less memorable than a small number of strong statements. Introductory ramblings, many changes of tempo, superfluous counterpoint and—a common fault—premature development, all befog the mind of the listener.

Most obfuscating of all, however, is the improvisatory type of exposition. Here, in the same spirit in which one might point out flaws in the prose style of Dickens or Balzac, I venture to mention Sibelius. The manner in which Sibelius so often presents his material in casual and disorganized form, only, later on, to pull himself and the music together, has always been deliriously acclaimed by critics as an architectonic feat. A bold and disrespectful listener, however, might logically maintain that the point at which the composer pulls himself and the music together is the point at which the music should start, and not before. This would mean, alas, a sacrifice of pages and pages of Sibelian idiosyncrasy (even the formlessness is an idiosyncrasy) which most would deplore. To which our nasty friend might reply: 'Perhaps the composer should have made that sacrifice before we had a chance of knowing what we were missing'.

Repetition, of course, is a straightforward way of dinning something into the listener's mind. The device is much despised for its association with redundancy, and can be very irritating when it takes a pathological form, as in Debussy's music. No one will deny, however, the powerful effect of modified repetition; the *chaconne* and the *passacaglia* have an inherent clarity and impressiveness that only a very bad composer can spoil. In the exposition of musical material, modified repetition probably combines more advantages than any other device. In Stravinsky's music it has always been of the first importance in providing these, as well as other, advantages: (1) the thematic material is impressed on the memory; (2) the subtle modifications are brought into relief by the sameness of the rest; (3) counterpoint can be added without danger to clarity; (4) an equilibrium of tonality is established which permits modulations, where they occur, to have their full effect and preserves the music from one source of obscurity, harmonic vacillation.

(6)

The question of tonality cannot be postponed any longer. In order to keep the subject within reasonable limits, only the relation between tonality and clarity can be discussed here. For myself, I am ready to accept any kind of tonality when the logic of it can be appreciated by the listener; in short, I do not believe in dogmatic theories on the subject.

The word 'atonalism' is often used, but I doubt whether atonalism often occurs except in short passages. A complete work written atonally would have to derive its form from rhythm and metre only, for variations in pitch would have only percussive value. In that case, a *Sonata for Electric Light Bulb*, the formal interest provided by the rhythmic switching on and off, or for *Gasometer*, the rhythmic rise and fall, controlled by valves, compensating for the lack of melismata, would be very pure

examples of atonal composition, and perhaps of luminous clarity as well. But atonalism, as the very word might have warned us, has seduced us away from music to other less widely practised arts. Let us return to music and go to the opposite extreme, to the use of as many tonal centres as possible, leaving microtones out of consideration.

Of the twelve-tone system it could be said that much bad music has been written because of it and some good music has been written in spite of it. If the good examples are examined it is astonishing to find how few of them really uphold the equality in the republic of tones that a rigorous application of the system demands. The tone-row of Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* with its succession of major and minor triads is too blatant an example ; the sort of defection I have in mind occurs where the composer cannot avoid or deliberately indulges a gravitation of his music towards one tonal centre. It is at just such moments, that is, when the system is temporarily abandoned, that many listeners say, 'There is something in the system after all.'

However, it is not the value of this kind of tonality but its clarity that is under discussion. Let us suppose that a superb musician with absolute pitch and a phenomenal memory listens for the first time to a serious twelve-tone work ; what are his chances of appreciating the structural logic of the work as it is being played ? There are these possible answers and these possible rejoinders to them : (1) He has little chance. No rejoinder ; (2) He has every chance. If so, what chance have others less gifted ? For such a man is one in ten million ; (3) It does not matter if he fails. But this implies that the structure of the work is of no significance ; (4) The music was never intended for listening without previous study. If so, here is a new art in which the ear is the slave of the eye, and we are back among the gasometers.

Let us suppose it is granted that there is here some obscurity, what is its principal cause ? In my view, the listener's failure to identify and remember the tone-row from the outset ; it would indeed be unreasonable to expect anything else to happen, since the tone-row's first appearance is so often partly in harmonic form or with contrapuntal accompaniment. A suggestion might here be taken from the court *vina*-players of India who, before playing a solo, run several times through the *rāg* they are about to use, in order to familiarize the listener with it ; they feel this to be necessary even though the music is not complicated by harmony or counterpoint. For a similar reason it might not be a bad idea to play the tone-row through in its four principal forms before the performance of a twelve-tone work ; in this way the numbers of appreciative listeners might be increased from one in ten million to one in a million, and the interest of the general public might rise to a level of positive indifference.

It is only too easy to make fun of the twelve-tone system and I don't mean to do so. As a tonic for a composer who has got himself in a rut it might be a good thing ; but whether his therapeutic exercises should be confided to the ears of the public is another matter.

Somewhere between the two extremes just described it appears, then, that the needs of clarity will best be served ; in short, clarity demands at least a small number of tonal centres, and at the best a single tonal centre. Instead of labouring this point I would like to introduce the reader to a musical parlour game. Draw a tone-row out of a hat ; if any triads turn up, start again. Let us suppose the tone-row is : C, B, F, G \sharp , G, B \flat , C \sharp , D, A, E, E \flat , G \flat . Play your tone-row on the piano. The effect will be inexpressive ; in fact there is no formal cohesion. Now play any note (for example, G \sharp) in the bass, or for that matter in the treble, and sustain it while you play from the same note (G \sharp) in the tone-row until you come back to the same note again. A formal connexion between the notes is now established and the music becomes more or less expressive ; this is simply the result of fixing the tonal centre. The game can be varied by playing a *basso ostinato* beneath the tone-row, giving preference, either by repetition or by metrical stress, to an arbitrary note : in our example we might play in the treble B, F, G \sharp , G, and so on, in semiquaver groups, to the accompaniment of a crotchet *ostinato* E \flat , G \flat , E \flat , C, B (metre : 3 + 2/4) ; here the tonal centre will be clearly E \flat . It is, of course, not claimed that the products of this game will have any artistic merit, but investigations on these lines will, I think, serve to prove that provided the tonal centre is well defined, the music will remain clear.

(7)

It has been tacitly assumed throughout this essay that clarity is a desirable quality in music. To a writer of Supersonic Symphonies or to a musical Simon Stylites clarity may well be unimportant ; but if, as I have assumed, the value of music is a relative value dependent upon communication, the views of these gentlemen are of no practical account. On the other hand, when clarity seems to be deliberately neglected it would be unfair to conclude that the composer is necessarily dishonest ; he has simply failed in this important respect, that is all. He may be a bad composer, a careless or lazy one ; he may be confused, in doubt whether to aim at clarity ; or frightened lest clarity should make his music seem tame and ordinary ; or, the most common reason, perhaps, he may be indulgent towards his own weaknesses and incapable of making a sacrifice.

There are still other composers, however, to whom the present essay would not be as interesting as a companion essay entitled '*Obscurity, or How to Conceal the Lack of Inventive Powers*'. I leave its composition to those who have made a special study of the subject.

OPERA PRODUCTION IN LONDON

Philip Hope-Wallace

There is little opera in London if you consider that the place has about twice the population of Sweden. There are two semi-state-subsidised opera houses (and an unaided touring company, a 'group' and some amateur societies). The two houses, instead of being complementary to one another as in every other capital which boasts two establishments, here compete; each, and possibly on the same nights, mounts *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, *Figaro*, *Butterfly* and *Bohème*: the big house (Covent Garden) does *Boris* and a good deal of Wagner (half the repertory). Sadler's Wells, the smaller house which is alleged to have a totally different audience of penniless 'plain men' (and plainer women) has a few specialities of its own including those two noble and lugubrious works, intended for the biggest sort of theatre, *Simone Boccanegra* and *Don Carlos*. At the Wells Wagner, however, is not essayed (as it once was before the war)—not even *Tannhäuser*, which is the first choice at every genuine *volksoper* elsewhere in the world. But is Sadler's Wells a *volksoper* in the Berlin or Vienna understanding of the term? Hardly. It has a sort of special status, sacrosanct, which no one likes to question. Illogicality however could hardly go further than this present position—the competition between the two houses for what public there is; and the illogical way in which the repertory is allotted: for this alas there is bad precedent both in Vienna and in Paris where one finds *La Flûte Enchantée* and *Fidelio*, *opéra comique* of the purest sort, at the Opéra and what ought to be *opéra* at the Opéra Comique.

No doubt what is wanted is a single house somewhere between the two in size—about as big as the opera house of Sweden, which a population of seven million people supports with a repertory of about forty operas, including Wagner, Mozart, the tear-jerkers and everything down to *Matthis* and *Wozzek*, works which no one who knows the set-up in England ever even dimly hopes to hear in London.

But the position would still be different in London, even had we such a house. Of the population of twelve million or so within easy reach of opera in London, a few thousands only are interested. The *smallness* of the opera public in England is something which few people (least of all the impresarios who are surprised when they lose millions of pounds on operatic ventures) will credit. It is only when the thing is made plain by the enthusiastic, but wholly inadequate, response to a novelty like Menotti's *The Consul* that some understanding of the limitations of this public is forced on general attention. It is literally a matter of thousands only;

ten performances of a given work and everyone who is going to make the effort to hear it will have been accounted for. After that—nothing. The strange and important thing to notice is that whereas in most other countries the opera public is merely a portion of the musical and theatrical public welded together, in Britain the opera public is a quite distinct group; it is not even to be confounded with the feverish mass who stand swaying to Rachmaninov concertos at the Proms. These people would be insulted if you suggested that they might be interested in opera. Large numbers of professional and amateur musicians regard opera with abhorrence as something not quite decent—an affair of snobbery, swans-on-wheels and immensely fat women shrieking as loud as they can. So too a drama public which laps up *Oklahoma* would think you mad to suggest that the tunes in *The Barber* were easier to whistle. There is, of course, Glyndebourne; Mozart is socially and æsthetically rather different. And there is a younger generation which is reported to be ‘mad about opera’, but hasn’t the pence or the courage to risk an outing on anything much else but *Madam Butterfly* or *Tosca* just yet.

Meanwhile a hard core of fanatics continues to attend all and every performance. Occasionally one of them dies; occasionally a new recruit is added to the nucleus which is largely interested in collecting and comparing different performances of the same opera and is inured to all and every kind of production, good (as in the ‘old days’) bad (as now), or indifferent—which is the norm.

It was felt, perhaps wisely, I do not know, when opera after the war once more became a possibility, that if a new generation were to be coaxed into the opera house, opera would have to *look* better than it usually did, either on tour or at Covent Garden. The new generation (as this argument went) had eyes better trained than ears; it would never stand for this or that and would expect a high standard of production and (*vide* the doyen of our music critics *passim*) would demand ‘a psychological realism in the casting’ and all the rest of it. Experience has shown this to be only partly true. Recently at Covent Garden for instance we saw performances of *Manon* which filled the house with enthusiasm and money. What was the attraction? Why—that ‘bad old relic of the wicked old days’; a *star* singing, what is more, in Catalan French while everyone else was, of course, dutifully singing in English to please the supposed new public. Her acting was rudimentary; her ‘psychology’ would have given Mr. Ernest Newman fits; but—well, Signorita Victoria de Los Angeles was singing like an angel and every opera fan in London (all three thousand of them) had turned out to hear her.

Perhaps, after all, those who decided that production was more important than (or at least as important as) the singing and the tone of the orchestra were putting the cart before the horse.

The truth is: you like singing, find it an expressive language and you therefore like drama carried on in that language; or you are deaf to the expressive power of the human voice and so deaf to operatic appeal. I have yet, in these days of the cinema, to meet the man who ever sat in an opera gallery on a wooden seat for five hours for the sake of the scenery—or the psychology either!

Let it look as nice as possible by all means; enhance the expressive power of the musical performance in every way you think legitimate. But what is going to count *finally* is the musical performance.

The effort to produce opera more winningly met a mild check in the fact that we had in 1945 scarcely any native talent in that field. Many talents were pressed into service; not all passed the test.

Those who have not seen the productions of Fritz Oscar Schuh in Vienna might be tempted to think that opera production in London was as wrong headed as anywhere in the world, which would be unfair. We have a high percentage of very badly produced performances relative to the extremely small repertory in hand. But freakish and unsuccessful opera production is fairly common on the mainland of Europe, too, and though there are safe traditional homes of opera such as Milan, Moscow, Zürich or Stockholm, wild ventures are not confined to Mr. Peter Brook's production of *Salome* at Covent Garden in costumes of a surpassing silliness by Salvador Dali, or Mr. Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Carmen* (with Escamillo in a white bowler hat) or *The Barber of Seville*, an orgy of horseplay at Sadler's Wells.

Besides, both the Wells and Covent Garden can boast very sensitive and successful productions to counterbalance these. Joan Cross's intimate and realistic production of *La Traviata* at Sadler's Wells; an orthodox and reasonable *Lohengrin* and (the work of Helpman the dancer) a decorous and sane *Madam Butterfly* may be instanced.

But most of the faults in English opera production arise from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of opera, too long to explore in the scope of this article. Put crudely, it is wrong to assume that in opera you have a play which is decorated with (and slowed down by) a lot of music and that it is the producer's job to distract the attention of the audience and divert it while this wretched musical padding is got through. Hence the byplay, the hopeless fussy realism, and, or (worse) adventitious fantastication which has overlaid so many recent opera productions (honourable exceptions by Norman Tucker, Christopher West and Michael Benthall). The nature of opera is double; a little self-examination (or ten minutes' watching a televised opera) will suffice to show that it is in the nature of opera to *divide* attention; you do not attend to opera (or to poetic drama for that matter) with eye and ear simultaneously. One *alternately* apprehends through first the one sense, then the other; very seldom and only for short stretches together. The essence of good opera production is *never to interrupt one sense with the other*; never to interrupt what the ear is taking in by diverting the eye with something unrelated to that sound; and conversely, never so to draw attention to the facts of music-making that the eye loses its theatrical perspective (as it did for instance when Toti Dal Monte used to conduct the orchestra with her fan, over the footlights, in the Mad Scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor*). This alternation of attention is the essence of opera; failure to grasp it is at the root of half our troubles in producing workable libretti too (e.g., the not inconsiderable talents of Bliss and J. B. Priestley combined in *The Olympians*—eight performances). It is more easily

grasped by those who know the opera really well than by someone who is a producer by virtue of his knowledge of stage lighting, though, of course, lighting has its part to play, an important one.

But, it may be asked, what of the style of production—is not that most important of all? This argument runs thus: it is the job of the good producer of opera so to present the work in question that for a *modern* audience it may have the maximum effect which the composer desired for it. Now the catch word there is ‘modern’. Obviously the way to produce Mozart, some would say, is in the conditions in which the works were originally produced, with candles and all—this leads to one sort of artiness certainly, but is in other ways less dangerous than to say that since *Figaro* was to its first audience a contemporary piece, therefore, to-day we should dress it in modern dress or—what would be more ‘amusing’—in the fashions of 1929. Another line is to say that Gounod wrote his *Faust* for the Opéra of the sixties, for gas lamps and all those trap doors and effects which no longer interest anybody to-day, so let us get back to Goethe and establish a genuine mediaeval atmosphere—whereupon it suddenly becomes obvious that the delightful waltz songs which Gounod had written especially for Mme. Cavahlo sound twice as incongruous as they do when enshrined in the style of the second empire Paris. Better leave things as they are! Besides, does the public really mind? What a storm of protest there would be from the ballet public (from whom we may take a tip now and then) if *Giselle* or *Swan Lake* were ‘brought up to date’ or rehashed in the interests of supposedly ‘bringing out’ the author’s true meaning.

The virtues of ‘taking opera out of moth balls’ often extolled by the more ignorant sections of the Press are in fact found to be easily exaggerated. There is, happily, every sign that this experimentation is on its way out. All the same, much damage remains; ‘actively’ bad production such as we have sometimes seen recently does far more harm than the old school passively bad production, which was simply an absence of caring about matching tights, wigs or lighting. The Sadler’s Wells *Barber* achieved something I would not have thought possible; a completely flat ‘curtain’ at the end of the great first act *crescendo* finale.

Can one lay down any rules? Certainly. There are two. Decide, from knowledge of the music, where at any given bar of the score the focus of attention should be (it may be on a voice or on a phrase in the orchestral pit or on a gesture on the stage) and having determined which claim is superior, pin the audience’s full attention there, without any compromise.

In the other field of style, compromise is the order of the day. A producer should try to get the maximum effect for a modern audience out of any given work—everything being permissible except in so far as it might lead to a betrayal of the composer, by making his music seem either incongruous or inadequate.

With these two golden rules in mind all that is further required is infinite patience, a touch of genius and a limitless supply of cash.

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